YOGA VASISHTA

in English by **Dr. Ramesam Vemuri**

Based on the original book in Telugu by

BRAHMASRI KUPPA VENKATA KRISHNA MURTY

BOOK 4

STHITI PRAKARANA

SUSTENANCE

Revised edition 2025

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About the Book

Yoga Vasishta is a treasure house of ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman?

It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between

Maharshi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.
The present volume, "Yoga Vasishta"– Book 4 'Sthiti Praskarana' 'Sustenance' is based on a presentation in Telugu by

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and forms a part of his lectures on "Yoga Vasishta" telecast

in Telugu by Gemini TV, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by

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In this book :

The 3000 stanzas of the fourth chapter on 'Sustenance' (Sthiti Prakarana) have been ably condensed and lucidly explained in simple words.

The origin of the world was discussed from several perspectives in the previous chapter and concluded that the origin of the creation is an illusion. The same tone is maintained in the present chapter on 'Sustenance' with more and lucid elaboration.

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YOGA VASISHTA

BOOK 4

STHITI PRAKARANA
SUSTENANCE

AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION

Why does an author keep the core message of his writing hidden deep inside his heart ?

He does so with the hope that the teaching would shine with double the vigor when a reader finally finds it. Because of that reason, he doesn't seal it securely in an iron vault; he only tucks it behind the tender petals of a colorful flower. His wish is that his heart should be accessible– but only to those readers who make a little effort to unravel it. Thus goes the thinking of great writers and poets; and in there lies the inner meaning of their poetic works.

The Celebrated Poet Kalidasa described the Sage Valmiki as the greatest of the spiritual guides. These words are very apt with respect to Yoga Vasishta. The poetic skills of any author may sparkle all by themselves when telling the story of a noble warrior and King like Shri Rama, or in narrating the end of the demon, Ravana. But writing a tome on the theme of a bone dry and abstruse subject like Vedanta with lyrical beauty, extending the text to 32,000 verses without losing the gravity in the discussions or the detail in narration in a gripping manner till the very end bespeaks of the immense capability of the Sage Valmiki. No other writer has attained such levels of excellence to date.

I consider myself blessed. Thanks to the benevolence and grace showered on me by my Gurus, Swami Janardanananda Saraswati and Swami Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda, I could fathom without much of an effort on my part, the depths of Sage Valmiki's heart and his teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta. With the purpose of sharing my understanding with all my fellow-seekers, I began a series of discourses on Yoga Vasishta on Gemini TV.

Inspired by the words of my teachers, I was tempted to investigate the inner meaning of Sage Valmiki's teaching. I was aided in my search by the redoubtable Saint Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami. His voluminous commentary on Yoga Vasishta under the title "tātparyaprakāśa vyākhya" repeatedly helped me in capturing the heights of knowledge disseminated in the text. This gave me the courage to gain the fruits of studying Yoga Vasishta.

Let me first introduce the venerable text Yoga Vasishta.

About Yoga Vasishta:

1. **Author**: Sage Valmiki
2. **Period of writing**: Some time after the completion of his earlier book, Ramayana.

3. **Alternate names** by which this book is known: jnānavāśiṣṭha, Vaśiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, ūttara rāmāyaṇa, mahārāmāyaṇa, vāśiṣṭha etc. etc.
4. **Size of the text**: The original text of the *Yoga Vasishta* is traditionally said to comprise 32,000 verses. However, some scholars opine that the actual count may be less than 30,000 (based on the Nirnaya Sagar 1937 Edition). It should be noted that quantifying a work of such a magnitude and intricacy is a complex task. Ultimately, an overly critical investigation into the exact verse count offers little value to the reader in terms of absorbing the text's spiritual message.
5. **Subject matter**: Inquiry into the Supreme Self. It comprises the teaching given to the 12 year old prince Rama by the Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishta. The book establishes that the man enlightened by the wisdom of knowing the highest truth will be able to function with excellence in this world.
6. **The style of Narration and other specialtie**s:

- The gist of each topic to be discussed is summarized upfront.
- The subject is illustrated through a captivating story.
- The symbolical significance of the characters used in the stories is explained by the author himself.
- The object of the text is not about the denying or contradicting any other theories.
- There are no polemic debates.
- The author raises a number of questions from various angles and answers them himself.
- Though the subject matter is that of tough Vedanta, one can see the poetic skills of the author at innumerable instances.
- The text is full of unimaginable metaphors that capture the reader's heart.
- The dominant Sanskrit meter used in this composition is *Anustup Chandas*, a rhythmic structure traditionally employed in spiritual texts. According to the rules of this meter, each *sloka* consists of 32 syllables. In this context, it is interesting to consider the mystery and significance of the number 32 in Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy. The number 32 represents completeness, a set of significant spiritual principles, or a state of divine order and balance. While the *Anustup* meter prevails, Sage Valmiki also employs other meters to suit specific contextual nuances within the work.

7. **Abridged Versions:**

- As the text is quite voluminous, many condensed versions of the book have been prepared both in the Northern and Southern parts of India. Some of the more popular versions are:
- The text by the Kashmiri Pundit Abhinandana comprising 6,000 verses.
- The text by Shri Swami Vidya Prakasananda Giri, Head of the Shukabrahma Ashram, Kalahasti having 8,000 verses.

8. **Translations:** Translations of the text are available in almost all languages. There are six translations in Telugu language itself -- five in prose form and one as verses. I consulted all these books in my work and I am indebted to those authors. Out of these, the translation by Shri M. Subbaraya Sharma was particularly helpful to me.

9. **Expert views:** Yoga Vasishta is highly revered not only during the old historical times, but also in modern days by the spiritual teachers.

For example:

- Swami Ramatirtha described Yoga Vasishta as the "most wonderful" text.
- The book is highly revered by the Malayala Swami, The Head of the Erpedu Vyasa Ashram.
- Yoga Vasishta is acclaimed as the foremost amongst the books on Advaita by the Head of Gayatri Peetha.

10. Structure of Yoga Vasishta:

There are six chapters in the text.

- *Vairāgyaprakaraṇa* -- On Detachment -- 1,500 verses -This first chapter describes in detail the feelings of detachment experienced by Shri Rama.
- *Mumukśu Vyavahāra Prakaraṇa* – On the Conduct of a piritual Aspirant -- 1,000 verses. This second chapter gives the details of the basic qualities to be attained by a spiritual aspirant. The importance of human effort in achieving liberation is discussed and it has been established that it is necessary that an effort should be made to obtain liberation.
- *Utpattiprakaraṇa* – On Origination -- 7,000 verses –This third chapter examines the reality of the visible world and if it has been created at all.
- *Sthitiprakaraṇa* – On Sustenance -- 3,000 verses – This fourth chapter investigates how the apparent world is sustained.
- *Upaśamaprakaraṇa* – On the Calm Down -- 5,000 verses - This fifth chapter talks of the method of obtaining a tranquil mind through True Knowledge.
- *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* – On Liberation -- 14,500 verses –This sixth and the final chapter is the largest wherein the achievement of Liberation is discussed thoroughly. It is divided into two parts - *Pūrvārdha and Uttarārdha*.

11. **Commentaries:** It is said that there are many commentaries in Sanskrit on YogaVasishta. However, only "tātparyaprakāśikā" by Swami Ananda Bhodhendra Saraswati is available in print. It was published by the NirnayaSagar Press in 1937. This commentary has received accolades from many learned pundits.

About Author Valmiki: It is opined by some experts that the author Valmiki of Yoga Vasishta was different from the author Valmiki of Ramayana. One group of such people belong to those that are opposed to Non-dualist philosophy. Their main concern is only to deprecate the importance of Yoga Vasishta as it is an unrivalled text on Non-duality. The other group contends that an evaluation on the authorship is called for using modern techniques rather than going by the word of tradition. Let us examine critically the various arguments advanced by this group.

The writing style of both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta is about the same. In fact, no critic has been able to point out any major differences. However, some of these critics ask why there is not even a hint made about Yoga Vasishta in Ramayana. The answer to this question is available right in the first chapter of Yoga Vasishta. One may take a look.

The second argument is that because we find reference to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, Arjuna, Sage Suka and others in Yoga Vasishta, it should belong to a period later than that of Bhagavad-Gita. But if we keep in mind the caliber and skill of a writer who could handle a complex and intricate subject as Advaita Vednata with such a dexterity as found in the book, it is unlikely that we will be persuaded to conclude that such an enlightened and exceptionally competent author belonging to a later period would have tried to create a false impression about the date of his work. Hence, it is untenable to argue that it belongs to the post-Bhagavad-Gita period.

A question may, however, arise about the reference to the events of later eons (*yuga*) in the text. But inclusion of a reference to the events that are likely to take place at a future date is quite typical of the Sage Valmiki. He did so in his other and more popular work, Ramayana too. In fact, in the Balakanda of Ramayana, his narration cuts across past, present and future times in the description of different events. Sage Valmiki resorts to this type of narrating the future in uttarakanda of Ramayana also. Thus the narration of future events as seen by him through clairvoyance is a characteristic of the Sage Valmiki. It is no wonder that we find examples of such descriptions of future events in Yoga Vasishta also. In fact, whenever a future event is described, the author raises a question through one of the characters in the book about the chronological inconsistency and a suitable reply is given right there. Readers familiar with the works of other great Seers and Sages do not find this style of writing odd at all. For example, we find future events being narrated at a current time in Agastya Samhita. Sage Vyasa authored an entire purana which describes the future events only.

Thus when viewed with an unbiased eye, it is inevitable to conclude that the author of Yoga Vasishta and Ramayana was one and the same poet.

Further, we have to note that the Sage Valmiki was not only a writer *par excellence*, but also a great Maharishi. The word 'Rishi' in Sanskrit means the one who realized the ultimate Truth (*tatva*). A true writer is one who can speak accurately. Because he has both these qualities, he could write with such a depth of understanding and beauty. We notice several instances of this signature style of the Sage in both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

I studied and tried to decipher the core message of Yoga Vasishta and the commentaries on it with the same spirit. I took help from elders, prayed to my teachers, and also consulted the teachings of Shri Janardanananda Swami who was not only a noble saint but also happened to be my father before his renunciation of the world. What I could understand is presented by me in my discourses that were telecast by the Gemini TV and the same is now offered in the form of a text. That is the reason it is called as the 'heart' of Yoga Vasishta.

We find a variation in spelling of the name of the Sage Vasishta. It is written in the Devanagari script both as Vaśiṣṭha and Vasiṣṭha. Both ways are correct as the former spelling is derived to mean as the one who conquered his senses and the latter one means the one who excelled as a householder.

Sage Vasishta himself clarified that writing his name either way was acceptable as quoted in a verse in Mahabharata (Canto 13, Chapter 63, verse 96). I adopted 'Vaśiṣṭha' in my writings as it would emphasize the importance of control, over the senses which is an important requisite in the study of Vedanta.

Acknowledgements:

All words are inadequate to express my indebtedness to my Teacher, Swami Ganapati Sachchidnananda. Therefore, I dedicate this work to him. I am also grateful to Gemini TV for telecasting my discourses. I tried to present the teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta in a logical manner and with a modern idiom. Please condone any omissions or commissions. However, my request to the readers is that this presentation should not be treated to be a condensation or abridgement of the original text. It is an effort to capture the "core" message and please study it in that spirit.

I am only nominally there in delivering this message. The inner sentient principle that motivates, acts and speaks is different. I pray to my Gurus to channel the Grace of that inexplicable principle to all in experientially realizing It.

Salutations to the Gurus.

Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy

1. INTRINSIC PROPERTY

An understanding of any substance begins with a study of its properties. The properties of any material are of two kinds: (1) Intrinsic Properties and (2) Transient or Assumed Properties.

Intrinsic property is the basic nature of any substance. For instance, let us take the moon. The moon is the most brightly appearing object in the sky among many twinkling stars. "Bright appearance" is the natural characteristic of the moon. As long as the 'bright appearance' is there, the moon is there. If that quality is absent, the moon itself is not there.

2. TRANSIENT OR ASSUMED PROPERTY

The properties that a substance assumes temporarily i.e. those characteristics that come and go are the Transient or Assumed properties. For example, we may say, "Look, Peter's house is the one where the bird is sitting." The bird does not sit on that house forever. In order to identify Peter's house amongst many similar dwellings, one made use of the bird sitting at that time on that house. One could identify that particular house because of the bird. One can identify Peter's house later on, even after the bird flies away.

In order to understand a new material, one has to understand its Intrinsic properties as well as its Assumed (Transient) properties. The intrinsic properties of the Brahman are *Sat* (Reality), *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Bliss). His transient or assumed qualities are Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution. One should know both these qualities of Brahman in order to understand him. It is very difficult to directly comprehend or talk about the intrinsic qualities of Brahman. That's why, at many places, the Vedas first talk about the assumed, temporary or transient qualities of the Brahman and then explain Brahman in terms of his natural intrinsic qualities.

The following quote from Taittiriyopanishad is very pertinent in this context among all the statements in the Vedas about the transient qualities of Brahman:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti |
ṭaittariyopaniśad 1-3-1

It means: "Brahman is that from which all the five major elements like the sky are born, by which all that were born are sustained and into which all those sustained finally enter and merge with it."

The properties of creation, sustenance and dissolution do not always adhere to the Brahman. Therefore, they are to be called as temporarily assumed characteristics. Both Vasishta and Valmiki Maharishis prepared the scope of their teachings in Yoga Vasishta keeping this fact in mind.

The Scheme adopted in presenting the subject matter in Yoga Vasishta was discussed at the beginning of the third Chapter - Utpatti (Creation) Prakarana. We felt that an answer would eventually come up. We presented a review of the salient points discussed in that chapter at its end. We understood the gist of the chapter to be that:

(i) The whole creation is only an illusion of our mind,
(ii) There is no true "existence" or "beingness" to this world, and
(iii) The main purpose of the chapter was to establish that "actionlessness" or "inaction" was the true nature of Brahman.

Further, we also felt that the truth of the above statements could be established by observing the actual state of the world.

All this gives us an idea of the approach followed in the book, Yoga Vasishta. The book opens with the Chapters on 'Renunciation' and 'Desire for Liberation'. These two chapters can in fact be considered as 'Introduction' to the subject. The real meaty stuff has not been touched at all in these chapters.

Substantive issues were taken up for the first time in the third Chapter - Creation (Utpatti). It was established in this chapter that the creation of the whole world is merely an illusion of the mind. Following it is the fourth Chapter on Sustenance. Even in this chapter, it is being taught that the continuance of the world too is unreal like a magic show. After this comes the Chapter Dissolution (Upasama). The illusory nature of the world is established in this chapter also. One has to appreciate that these three Chapters together deal with the three temporarily assumed characteristics of the Brahman viz. Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution. The True Intrinsic Characteristics of Brahman and the advantage of gaining the Knowledge of Brahman are discussed in the final and sixth Chapter on Nirvana (Liberation).

Thus, the broad approach in the book, Yoga Vasishta is:

Group I: Comprising two chapters (Vairagya and Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranas);
Group II: Consisting of the three chapters dealing with the Temporarily assumed characteristics of Brahman as per the aphorism ""*yato vä imäni bhütäni jäyante"* (Utpatti, Sthiti and Upasama Prakaranas); and,
Group III: Comprising the sixth chapter dealing with the purpose of studying the essential form of Brahman (Nirvana Prakarana).

The Chapter on Creation (Utpatti) is the most difficult chapter to understand in the second group. Much of the actual subject has been very well covered there. Very same issues are again and again explained from different viewpoints in the next two Chapters on Sustenance and Dissolution (Sthiti and Upasama).

Redundancy is purposefully built in by the author because we often get the same doubts manifesting in different garbs. There is yet another reason for the repetition. For example, musicians sing the same *pallavi* again and again. If one asks them why they do it, they point out the subtle differences in *sangati*. Only expert musicians can appreciate these nuances. In a similar way, even in the field of philosophical logic, arguments are repeated with certain subtle differences. One cannot ignore these subtleties simply because they are insignificant. Such an attitude can sometimes defeat the purpose of the main theorem itself.

[**Note**: *Pallavi* refers to the first (usually) two lines of a song and are repeated throughout the song. *Sangati* is a technical beauty associated with musical phrases reflecting the essence of both the tune and lyric.]

Moreover, Lord Sri Rama was by himself an intellectual. To top it, he gained proficiency in many fields. It is but natural that such a person should get quite a number of doubts. That's why Vasishta Maharshi had to expand the scope of the book to explain the issues from many different angles. In this process, the Chapter on Sustenance became 3,000 sloka strong.

3. CHAPTER ON SUSTENANCE OPENS

Let us now recapitulate briefly the issues discussed in this chapter, keeping in mind the subtleties of the arguments. Vasishta opened his discourse as follows:

Vasishta: "Rama, we may describe Brahman as one that is unaffected by this world. "Being-unaffected" is an attribute of the Brahman. In the same way, Brahman is sat-chit-ananda – this is another attribute. In fact, these two are not two different qualities. Our mind is completely clouded with the mundane worldly impressions. Hence, it is necessary first to rid it of these impressions in order to understand Brahman.

"It is better to approach this topic from the position that Brahman is beyond the world. This method may be described as "Looking for Brahman-without-worldliness." Once we understand this approach, it will be easy to grasp that Brahman is truly sat-chit-ananda. The Vedas talked about "**यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते** " "*Yatova imäni bhütäni jäyante*…." etc. only for this reason of enunciating a teaching based on 'worldlessness'. I too followed this approach in the Chapter on Creation.

"Rama, Vedas did not stop at "*yato vä imäni bhütäni jäyante*." They also stated "**येन जातानि जीवन्ति**" "*yena jätäni jīvanti* ". That means, all living things created are sustained by the very same Brahman. There are many such statements in the Vedas. For example,

1. "**येन द्यौह् प्रुथ्वी ध्रुओह**" "*yena dyauh pruthvī druòhä*" which means, "this Earth is able to exist because of the Brahman."
2. "**कोह्येवान्यात्**" "*kohyevänyät* - "**कह् प्रान्यात्**" "*kah präṇyät*" - "**यदेन आकाश आनन्दो नश्यात्**" "*yadena ākāśa ānando naśyāt.*", which means, "who can survive in this world without the Brahman?"
3. "**भीषाऽस्माद्वातः पवते**" "*bhīṣā'smādvātaḥ pavate*", meaning, "the wind moves, sun rises, fire, Indra,Yama, and all others perform their functions from a fear of Brahman."

All such sentences confirm the sustenance of the world (universe). Further, we have:

4. "**सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीत** " "*sadeva somyedamagra āsīt*", this whole universe existed as '*sat (truth and beingness)* ' before creation.
5. "**अत्मावा इदमेकैवग्र आसीत**" "*atmāvā idamekaivagra āsīt*", this whole world existed as a non-dual Self (*atma*) before creation.

"Such statements imply that the universe was existing as '*sat*' even at the time of Dissolution.

"On one hand many of these statements from the Vedas go to show that the universe is there now and continues to be there in a subtle form and as '*sat*' even after Dissolution. On the other hand we established in the third Chapter on Creation that the universe was not at all created and it had no existence. From a human intellectual point of view, there is every reason to get several doubts regarding this contradiction. Some people postulate untenable hypotheses to reconcile these contradictions. But, Rama! None of them is valid. The apparent world is:

भविष्यत्पुरनिर्माणं चित्तसंस्थमिवोदितम् ।
मर्कटानलतापान्तमसदेवार्थसाधकम् ।।

bhaviṣyatpuranirmāṇaṃ cittasaṃsthamivoditam |
markaṭānalatāpāntamasadevārthasādhakam ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 4

"This entire world is a projection of the mind and is equivalent to the construction of a future city. It is like the heat imagined by a monkey in a branch of a tree.

(We came across this metaphor in the third Chapter on Creation. Some monkeys watched forest fire generated when two branches of a tree rubbed against one another. They believed that fire existed in the tree branches. Therefore, when they felt cold, they tightly hugged the tree branches. Because of the intensity of their belief, they felt warmth in the branches and did not suffer any cold. This is the allusion referred to here).

"This whole world is like that heat in the tree branch. In fact it's not there, but it causes the feelings of happiness and sadness etc. to the ignorant. Rama, this is the ultimate truth.

4. SEED AND PLANT

Rama: "Holy Master! May be it is more appropriate to say that, in the way the whole tree is there in a seed, the whole world is there in the form of a seed during Dissolution.

महाकल्पक्षये दृश्यमास्ते बीज इवाङ्कुरः ।

mahākalpakṣaye dṛśyamāste bīja ivāṅkuraḥ |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 19

"Many learned people also postulate similarly. Could they be ignorant?"

Vasishta: "Rama!

ब्रूते य एवमज्ञत्वमेतत्तस्यास्ति शैशवम् । *brūte ya evamajñatvametattasyāsti śaiśavam* |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 21

"Do understand that such people who talk in those terms are ignorant, and childish too. In the example you cited, there is a form (shape, body) to the seed and therefore, the tree could possibly be within it in a finer form. But the Brahman is formless (bodyless)!

मनःषष्ठेन्द्रियातीतं यत्स्यादतितरामणु ।
बीजं तद्भवितुं शक्तं स्वयंभूर्जगतां कथम् ।।

manaḥṣaṣṭhendriyātītaṃ yatsyādatitarāmaṇu |
bījaṃ tadbhavituṃ śaktaṃ svayaṃbhūrjagatāṃ katham ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 25

"Brahman is so subtle that he is beyond comprehension by sensory organs and mind. Moreover Brahman is self-born. That means, it is not like a seed that is produced by a tree. It is unique and changeless. How could such a Brahman be a seed for something else? Therefore, the truth is that the world does not exist in Brahman.

"Further, the world has not come about through evolution. It arises as an illusion. It's like a rope appearing as a snake. It is not that the snake was present in the rope as a seed before the illusion originated. In the same way, this world too was not there in Brahman at the time of Dissolution."

Rama: "Master! You said many times that this world is the mental kingdom of Hiranyagarbha. You also added that this world did not need any enabling causes for its creation. Hence, one has to say that the world was inherent as a memory within the mind of Hiranyagarbha. So, what's wrong in saying that the world is able to regenerate from the memory of Hiranyagarbha at the end of the period of Dissolution?"

Vasishta: "Let us say, you had a dream. The things you see in a dream did not really exist during the period of your dream. In the same way, a thing appeared in your imagination. It does not have an existence even during the time of your imagination. Suppose you had a recollection. The object of your memory does not exist when you recollect it. When your experience is like this, how is it possible for you to imagine that the world which was a memory in the mind of Hiranyagarbha at the time of Dissolution can have real existence?"

Rama: "Sir, suppose I am in the third state of *Suśupti* (deep sleep) and lost my awareness. Just because of this, all my accumulated impressions do not evaporate. The moment I come back to my normal conscious state (**जाग्रदावस्थ** *jāgradāvasthā*), all my impressions surface and recollections come back. In the same way, Hiranyagarbha could be in an illusory state at the time of dissolution, but he can get back all his memories at the end of the Dissolution period. What is wrong with this ?"

Vasishta: "Rama! You did not attain liberation (**मोक्ष** *mokṣa*) in that time gap you moved from *suśupti* to wakefulness (**जाग्रदावस्थ** *jāgradāvasthā*). The same "you" has been continuing at both the places. Therefore, your memory could come back to you. But the state of Hiranyagarbha was not the same at the time of Dissolution. Please note that we are not talking about the day-to-day dissolution. I am talking about the Final Dissolution (*mahāpralaya*).

Hiranyagarbha attained liberation at that time. He is no longer there. A new Hiranyagarbha has come for the next (phase of) creation. He is different. How can the memory of the earlier Hiranyagarbha be carried forward to the new one? Therefore, what you say is not applicable. The fundamental meaning of all the illustrative statements referred to above in the context of Dissolution have one common theme – the world is in a state of Brahman at the time of Dissolution.

"A corollary can be drawn from this. The creation, living being (*Jīva*), and the Creator (*Eswara*) are forms of Brahman (**चिन्मात्र स्वरूप** *cinmātra svarūpa*). To look at the creation as merely 'world' is a delusion. To be able to see the world as Brahman is liberation. If we examine the fundamental basic principle of *jīva* or *Eswara*, it is Brahman only. Thus Rama delusion or liberation is a function of the way we behold. Unless we negate the visible universe, the devil of our mind does not go away. (Negation here implies recognizing the fact that the visible world is unreal). But you may get a doubt that the mind is within; the visible universe is outside. If we transform the outside world, how can a change come about in the mind that is within? But, please remember, as I told you earlier, the artificial differentiation of within and without is brought about by the mind only. In fact, there is nothing like inside and outside.

मनो जगज्जगदखिलं तथा मनः परस्परं त्वविरहिते सदैव हि ।
तयोर्द्वयोर्मनसि निरन्तरं क्षिते क्षितं जगन्नतु जगति क्षिते मनः ।।

mano jagajjagadakhilaṃ tathā manaḥ
parasparaṃ tvavirahite sadaiva hi |
tayordvayormanasi nirantaraṃ kṣite
kṣitaṃ jagannatu jagati kṣite manaḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 15

"Mind is the world. The world is the mind. They are not different. If mind ends, the world ends; but by mere ending of the world (as at the time of Dissolution or in deep sleep), mind does not end."

Rama: "How can you substantiate that?"

Vasishta: "There is no dearth of evidence. An example for this is the *aindavopakhyāna* (the story of Aindavas) that we narrated earlier. Another proof is in *indrajalopakhyāna* (the story of Magic Show) that tells about the history of Lavana. I agree that these two are told from the standpoint of creation. I shall narrate to you *bhargavopakhyāna* as further confirmation to establish that the state of the world is an outcome of the mind.

5. BHARGAVOPAKHYANA

Vasishta: "You know already about the various Periods, dissolutions and final Dissolution. In that sequence, one Great Dissolution was over; the life-period of a Brahma was completed. A new Brahma has come. Creation was started on his first day. An extremely noble person, Brighu was born in that creation. As you are aware, some jīvas in spite of a lot of austerities (*Tapas*) to their credit in the earlier Periods (*Kalpas*) failed to attain liberation because the Period had ended and Dissolution followed. Such *jīvas* take birth as officials with authority in the next Creation in the positions of Manus, Seven Sages, Gods and so on. Their births, life histories etc do not resemble the mundane lives of the usual family-oriented persons. Their whole attitude is different. Brighu belongs to that cadre. He was destined to become one of the Seven Sages in the upcoming Period.

" The word *brighu* means mountain slope. This particular Brighu used to spend most of his time with his wife observing austerities on the slopes of Mount Mandara. Sukra was born to this pious couple. By the time he was an adolescent, Sukra was as handsome as Cupid, as intelligent as Brihaspati and as intensively meditating as his father.

"The family was living all by themselves. Their habitat was the forest. The father was always in deep meditation and remained motionless like a statue. Whenever his father was out of meditation, Sukra used to serve him with devotion. Inspired by the teachings of his father in such times, Sukra too used to go into deep meditation. But he could not stay long in this position of deep meditation (*samādhi*). By the time Sukra was out of his meditation, the father used to be back in his own deep meditation and stay immovable like a statue. As he had nothing to do otherwise in such times, Sukra used to roam around the hills and valleys.

"Sukra was by nature imaginative, kind hearted and poetic. The scenic beauty of the forest exalted him. Peacock calls, flowerbeds, cool breeze and moonlight nights used to intoxicate him. But, his father's teachings of philosophy reminded him of the transient nature of things. When such rock-stable mountains were said to be impermanent, of what value could be the flowerbeds ? Of what significance were the mutually fighting birdcalls? What value was there in the waxing and waning moonlight ? He could never decide. On one side was the exciting beauty in nature.

On the other side was his desire for meditation and *brahmagnāna* (knowledge of the Supreme). On one side was the feeling that the world was real. On the other side he was longing to understand himself. Vacillating in these contradictions and conflicting pulls, he lost peace of mind.

"One day during those times of wavering , Sukra tried to meditate in the presence of his father. His father was already in deep meditation (*samādhi*). Sukra was, however, unsettled and was unable to concentrate. While he was struggling, he heard some laughter and giggling from above. He lifted his head to look up. Because of his extrasensory powers obtained as a result of his earlier meditations, he could notice some divine females wandering in the sky. They were not the usual sort of girls. They were Apsaras, very beautiful and tantalizing. Because of the impressions of the deeds of the past births, the beauty of one particular girl totally intoxicated him.

He did not know how far or far away in the sky was that girl, but he was enjoying her body smells and the sound of her moving feet as if the girl was just next to him. In a few moments, the group of girls moved away. Impulsively, Sukra started to follow them in their path.

"But suddenly the seeker in Sukra arose. He (the seeker in Sukra) brought back discretion. He controlled his wayward feelings, brought himself back to his senses and walked to the side of his father. Sukra's father, Brighu advised him to control his mind and meditate. Sukra began his meditation again. All unwanted thoughts stopped. He was almost feeling an empty mind. But suddenly, without his knowledge, that beautiful girl once again came back to his mind and totally occupied his thoughts. After a short while, Sukra forgot himself. He identified with her and became one with her !

6. THOUGH PRESENT HERE ROAMING ELSEWHERE

Vasishta: "Sukra did not know how long he stayed in that state. His thoughts and imaginations grew profusely. The dainty group of damsels disappeared. His ladylove alone was present. She was walking ahead and Sukra was following her. She went into heaven. He followed her there. The heavenly world and the beings therein were truly wonderful. The enchanting gardens, magnificent swimming pools, eye-catching mansions, were all a feast to his eyes. Sukra could see everything very clearly. Gradually, Sukra saw the Guardians of the Directions (**दिक्पालका**'s *dikpālakās*), heard the sounds of their chariots, observed their houses, their enjoyments, their strolling, songs and dances, boon-giving trees and so on. His ladylove was still on the move. She finally reached the court of Indra, with Sukra still in tow. Seeing Indra seated on the royal throne, Sukra bowed with respect. Indra, reciprocating the courtesy, welcomed Sukra and seated him beside himself on the throne. Sukra's joy knew no bounds.

"Indra arranged a guest house for Sukra. After resting there for a while, Sukra started to explore the town. He saw many beautiful girls on the way. He met with his ladylove at one place. They fell in love with each other. Sukra wished for privacy and darkness to befall immediately. Surprisingly night befell. On the top of it, the lovers received "*Amrita*" sent by Indra as a gift in that park. Thus Sukra spent half of *Krita yuga* (Krita Period) enjoying with that girl. Sukra went back to Indra's place at the end of that long night. He lived there happily for another four *yugas*.

पुण्यक्षयानुसंधानात्ततश्चावनिमण्डले ।
तयैव सह मानिन्या पपातोपहताकृतिः ।

puṇyakṣayānusaṃdhānāttataścāvanimaṇḍale |
tayaiva saha māninyā papātopahatākṛtiḥ |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 8, Sloka 15

"It occurred to Sukra, who had been enjoying all happiness in his mental world so far, that the fruits of his good deeds had come to an end. No sooner, he along with his ladylove dropped to the earth.

The process of fall was as follows: Because of the thought that the fruits of his good deeds ended, his divine body was destroyed. And so was the body of his ladylove. As a result, the lovers were wandering in their astral bodies like birds in the sky without a place. Slowly, they reached the rays in the moonlight. Through those rays, they entered into some edible seeds. One of the seeds reached the country Dasarna. One Brahmin happened to cook that grain and eat it. The *jiva* in that seed entered the womb of the Brahmin's wife through his sperm and was born as a boy. He was named again in this birth as Sukra.

[We should note here that Puranas usually give the same name to a *jīva* while narrating the various lives of that *jīva*. This is done purely for the convenience of the story. It could be that the same *jīva* could have had different names in different births. Because these stories have the objective of demonstrating the progression of the sequence of lives of a particular individual, Rishis usually refer to that *jīva* by one name.]

"Thus, Brighu's son, Sukra was reborn in Dasarna country as a Brahmin's son. He had the company of holy people there too. Under their influence, he learnt the pious ways of life and lived for a *Manvantara* (71 sets of Four Yugas make one *Manvantara*) in meditation. But one day, he came across a strange situation. The beautiful damsel that came from Heaven long back reappeared as a doe and was wandering around the place of his meditation. Though he had been in meditation for a *Manvantara*, his mind succumbed to lust. The doe gave birth to a human looking male baby.

"Ever since the baby boy was born, there has been a drastic change in Sukra. With unbounded affection for the boy, he desired for the best of everything for the kid. He wanted the boy to have enormous riches, unparalleled education, and sterling character. With this objective, he started looking for his forgotten assets. The boy's future was a constant worry for him. Because of this anxiety, he lost composure and balance of mind. He did not have a meditative mind any more. While he was thus lost in his intense concern for the child's future, he suddenly died.

"Sukra was reborn as the king of Madhura in his next birth. He lived there happily for many years, earned name and fame and took *vanaprastha* (the third stage in the life of a family person). Finally he died. As a result of his good deeds, he was born again in a meditative family on the banks of the "River Samanga". In this life of his, Sukra was rid of all of his bad qualities, was able to obtain stable *vairāgya* (renunciation), and attained *samādhi* state. He stayed firm in his meditation.

7. ORIGINAL BODY

Vasishta: "Rama! Do you recall the opening words of this whole story ? Did you notice where all this sequence of rebirths took place ? All this happened in the mental world of Sukra who was sitting beside his father struggling to achieve concentration of mind. Thousands of years passed while Sukra was thus lost in his cogitations and fancies. With no food and water for so many years, his body desiccated. One day, he collapsed and fell down like a tree cut at its roots.

"Though his body shrunk and dropped like a dried leaf, his mind was prancing and dancing like a youthful deer. After several hundred thousands of years, it finally rested on the banks of the River Samanga.

अनन्तवृत्तान्तघनां पेलवां सुदृढामपि ।
तां संसृतिदशां शुक्रो विदेहोऽनुभवन्स्थितः ।।

anantavṛttāntaghanāṃ pelavāṃ sudṛḍhāmapi |
tāṃ saṃsṛtidaśāṃ śukro videho'nubhavansthitaḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 9, Sloka 5

"Sukra could enjoy the worldly pleasures and family life without a body for hundreds of thousands of years. How could he do that? It's because one forgets the previous bodies in the illusory belief that the present body is real. Because of the forgetfulness of the previous bodies, the current body and its immediate world appear so solid. All events taking place look concrete. But remember, all this is still a fiction of the mind. If you take a holistic view, the world is baseless. What Brighu's son did too was to weave a fine fiction in his mind. Hence, he could enjoy so many lives (births) without a body.

"The body that was a substratum for the imaginative mind of Sukra, the physical body, had been totally destroyed by now. The muscles and blood were gone. Mere skin and bones remained. Even though the corpse was lying there, neither any birds nor animals, not even worms tried to feed on it. The reason for this was the presence of Brighu sitting there in meditation. He conquered all feelings of attachment and hatred. He was a great meditative soul. Because of his meditative powers, all creatures including worms and insects behaved in a friendly way towards the corpse.

"After a thousand years thus passed (in the count of Brighu), he got up from his meditation. He noticed the dried up body of his son lying beside him. Though he was such a meditative and pious sage, he was overtaken by the feelings of affection for his son. He drowned himself in sorrow. The sorrow turned into anger. In this anger he ruminated thus: "Gosh, scared of my meditative status, all creatures including animals and birds and even worms did not have the courage to touch the body of my son; how dare the God of Death take away the life of my son right in my presence when I was alive? I shall curse him." He was boiling with such uncontrollable anger.

8. DEATH'S TEACHING

Vasishta: "Vibrations of the intense angry thoughts of Brighu reached the God of Death. The God of Death appeared before Brighu and addressed him:

God of Death: "Oh, Maharshi Brighu ! Those that are familiar with the way of the world and who know the rationale of life, do not get annoyed even if there was a mistake on the part of others. Needless to say that such persons never get angry when there was no mistake at all. You are a learned meditative man. We are just officials performing our duties. We don't stop our functions under threats. We respect elders but are not cowed down by them.

"Oh, Ignorant Maharshi! Do not think of cursing me and ruin the good effect of your own austerities. Who do you think I am? I am Time. I swallowed up millions of immense universes. I swallowed up billions of Brahmas, Vishnus, Maheswaras and others. None of them could ever curse me. What are you, after all ? Do you think you can curse me ?

"If I am absorbing so much into myself, it's not because of my likes and dislikes. This is the law of creation. Just as water flows downwards, all living beings fall into the clutches of "Time." You have certain Laws of Nature to follow. So have I. Do not cross the Laws that have to be obeyed by you in ignorance.

"Further what happened to your discretion? What happened to your meditation? Your clairvoyance? Your philosophical wisdom? You make this entire ruckus simply because your son died. Don't you know that for a *Jiva*, the subtle body is more important than the gross body? What is the subtle body? It is thought. That means the mind is the subtle body.

"When you were in deep meditation, your son's mental body traveled in mental worlds. For some distance, it (mental body) assumed the physical body of Sukra as its own. It then reached Heaven and assumed a godly body. It spent four Periods (*yugas*) of life in that body. Then it dropped down to earth in Dasarna country where it assumed the body of a Brahmin. Later it took the body of a king of Kosala. In the next birth, it became a villager in a forestland. After that it became a swan on the banks of the Ganges. In the next birth, he was a king again in the Surya dynasty. Further on, he was a priest in Saura and Salwa countries teaching mantras.

"Next it became a Vidhyadhara in the land of Vidhyadharas. Then it was born as a son of a sage (muni) on the earth. Later it became the king of Madra country. Then he was born as the son of Sage (*Riśi*) Vasudeva and presently doing meditation on the banks of the Samanga River.

"Maharshi! I did not narrate all of your son's births.I forgot a few. He was a hunter once on the Vindhya Mountains. He was, another time, a district official in Sauvira country. He was born as a donkey too in Trigarta country. He became a bamboo grove in Kirata land. He was born as a deer in a desert. He was born as a snake on a palm tree once. Another time he was born as a fowl living near *Indian Mulberry (Morinda sp.)* trees. Later he was born as a sorcerer and managed to become a Vidhyadhara.

"He lived for a Kalpa period (4.32 billion years) in the body of a Vidhydhara. At the end of Kalpa, he was burnt like a moth in the fire of Pralaya (Dissolution). When the creation started afterwards again, he was born as the son of a Brahmin called Vasudeva. Thus, your son's mind is in the form of Vasudeva's son now and performing austerities. If you so desire, you can have a look with your clairvoyance."

[**Note**: Sage Vasishta did not earlier describe so many births when he himself narrated the story of Brihukumara. Now through the words of the God of Death, many more lives were described. One should note that such details are irrelevant to this story. That is to say that these do not make the principal issue.

What these sentences imply is that it took many births and a very long time period. We may not be able to compare the time units of that era and the time units now. Here lies the crucial point. What was a thousand years in the count of Sage Brighu, is equivalent to several hundred thousand years in the count of Sukra's mental world. This was brought out well in the Lilopakhyana in the third Chapter on Creation. We shall now resume the story.]

Sage Brighu who had been fretting and fuming so far, mellowed down with the above words of the God of Death. He bowed to the God of Death and addressed him :

Brighu: "Hey, Lord! What are we, compared to you ! Because of destiny, I became a victim to the feelings of attachment for my son. Without realizing the strength of your rule, I tried to curse you. I was wrong ! I deserve to be punished.

"I did look at it with clairvoyance. My son is performing austerities on the banks of the Samanga River, as you said. I am now very clear. The mind is not born because of the body. The body comes into existence because of the mind. This solid-looking body made of five elements (*pancha bhutas*) undoubtedly takes shape because of the mind.

मनो जगति भूतानां द्वे शरीरेऽत्र सर्वगम् ।
मन एव शरीरं हि येनेदं भाव्यते जगत् ।।

mano jagati bhūtānāṃ dve śarīre'tra sarvagam |
mana eva śarīraṃ hi yenedaṃ bhāvyate jagat ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 11, Sloka 18

"Therefore, every person has two bodies; not one. One is this physical body. The second is the mind. The physical body is limited. The mind-body is all permeating. That's what creates the whole world! Even though it looks as if there are apparently two bodies, both these bodies are in fact mind only. They are not different from the mind. Oh, God of Time! This is really wonderful!"

God of Death: "Well said, Great Sage! But it is not truly correct when you say that there are two bodies viz. Physical Body and Mind for the *jīva* (Individual self). The true statement is that the three *lokās* (worlds) are merely mental constructs.

मनो मनननिर्माणमात्रमेतज्जगत्त्रयम् ।

mano manananirmāṇamātrametajjagattrayam |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 11, Sloka 23

"From this it is clear that whatever you see – the sentient or the insentient - in this world is all a mental construct. In other words, they are polymorphs of the mind. This has become possible because only "Existence (*sat*)" is the substratum behind the mind and it is the mind that differentiates the sentient and the insentient based on its own memory impressions (*vasanās*).

That is to say that the "Existence" which is the basis of the mind assumes the forms of both insentient things and sentient objects. Or to put it simply, just as the seed becomes the stem, branches, foliage, flowers, fruits and so on, Existence which is the substratum, i.e. Brahman, manifests itself as this great wide world.

"There is only ONE substratum. That is "Existence." That is the Supreme Brahman (**परब्रह्म** *Parabrahman*). From that alone all these billions of wonderful and surprising mental capabilities are arising. Some of those mental capabilities turned out to be gods. Some turned out to be men. Some turned out to be insects. Thus many classes of living beings were born. Gradually gurus and disciples came into existence.

9. EXTRA BODY

God of Death: "Great Sage! All these are the ramifications of the vibrations in the mind. One such modification is presently sitting on the banks of the Samanga River. Let's go and take a look."

"Agreeing on this note, both Brighu and the God of Time traveled high in the sky, went straight to the banks of the Samanga River, looked around for Brighu's son and finally reached his place.

No sooner had he looked at Brighu's son who was in deep meditation (*Nirvikalpa samādhi*), the God of Death shouted loudly, "Ah, here is your son!" Disturbed by this shouting, Brighu's son slowly opened his eyes. He saw the two Brahmins standing in front of him. He bowed with respect to both and seated them on a large stone nearby. He addressed them as follows:

Brighu's son: "Reverend Brahmins! I am very delighted to see you. I experience in your presence the rare feeling of being free from delusion – a state that cannot be obtained even after meditating for thousands of years. May I know who you are?"

"When he heard these words, Brighu was moved with tears in his eye. But quickly composing himself, he said,

Brighu: "Son, you were my son in the last birth. You are also an ascetic (*tapasvi*). Look back with clairvoyance."

"At these words, Brighu's son looked inwardly. He saw all his past history like reels moving. He regained his normal state after a time. He couldn't utter a word. He was astounded. He bowed to his father with happiness. Gaining his cool, he said as follows:

Brighu's son: "Ah, indeed strange is the way that God works! Because of destiny this whole world is turning like a wheel. Oh, I went through so many births! I am not sure I remember all the births. I wandered so much. I enjoyed it so much. I experienced both good and bad. All the wandering has ended. The delusion is gone. "Father, Please come along. I want to see the body that I left on Mount Mandara. By now it might have been desiccated like a dried leaf. I do not desire anything now. Nor do I deny anything. I am just observing the fantastic way destiny runs. That's why I am! There's no other work for me. Let us start."

10. THERE LIES THE OLD BODY

"When Brighu's son, Sukra spoke thus, both Brighu and God of Death felt happy and consented to go with him. All the three went along the path of the sky discussing the secret principles of the world and reached the hermitage of Brighu on Mount Mandara. Sukra saw his old body there. He felt disconsolate when he saw his body of skin and bones, though he had been talking high philosophy thus far. Shedding tears profusely, he bemoaned before his father saying,

Brighu's son, Sukra: "Oh Father, this is the old body of mine. Look at its state!"

Neither Brighu nor the God of Death said anything. With uncontrollable sadness, Sukra continued,

Sukra: "Behold Father! Do you see how that body so dearly nurtured by you with love and affection has now become? Under your care, this body grew like a strong elephant. After that, this very body moved in the company of the goddesses in Heaven. I am unable to recall when the body had changed like this.

Brighu: "Oh, Dear Body! What stages have you gone through! How much did I enjoy it with you! Such a pleasurable body you were, but now you are no more than skin and bones. One gets the feeling of renunciation by a single look at you. But why do I even need renunciation now? I got rid of the devil of "mind" (**चित्** cit). I am happy now. I do not have sorrow. I do not care for comforts. I do not have doubts. I do not have thoughts. I am in a state of nullified mind. I am in a state of liberation while being alive (*jīvanmukta*). Even you are lying there without any mental cogitations and vibrations of thoughts. I am happy for this."

दिष्ट्या पश्याम्यमननां वने तनुमिमामहम् ।।

diṣṭyā paśyāmyamananāṃ vane tanumimāmaham ||

Sthiti Prakaranam, Sarga 15, Sloka 26

Listening to this story, Sri Rama, frowned a bit and questioned as follows:

Rama: "Master! What does that mean? Was Sukra happy or sad? He passed through many bodies by now. The body in which he is alive is okay. Why should he have this sort of attachment for a dried up and desiccated old body of his? Is it because of the notion that it was born to such a great personality as Brighu?"

Vasishta: "Not so Rama. The loves and hates of people go by the fruits of their past actions. This *jīva* called Sukra observed great austerities in the previous Kalpa and desired to achieve, in the following Kalpa, lordship over a planet and the position of being a preceptor for Demons. The fruits of all actions in the previous eras culminated as Sukra's body in this Kalpa. So the *jīva* of Sukra of erstwhile era has to live the effects of all those actions in this life in the body of Brighu's son.

"But before the fruits of those actions blossomed like the petals of a flower, there was a mental perturbation in the mind of youthful Sukra. Under the strength of that mental perturbation, the old body got dropped and many new bodies were generated. But the set of newly generated fresh bodies did not have any old fruits of action chasing them. They were born of newly committed actions, had suffered the corresponding effects of the actions and perished at the end of their period.

"There is still a body of the son of the sage on the banks of the river 'Samanga'. It is alive. It has yet to experience a few effects of its previous actions. But that is only a small part. The body of the son of Brighu, had to still experience billions of the consequences of the earlier actions. It has to reap the consequences till the end of this Kalpa. That is the reason why it did not petrify even after life had gone out of it. Nor could any worms destroy it.

Because this fact is so strongly etched into it, the *jīva* of Sukra was unable to overcome attachment towards it. This is true for everyone who has a body, however knowledgeable one may be, however detached one may be. Nobody can escape from this rule – not merely the un-illumined but even the knowledgeable ones!

"The Sun in the sky is pretty stable. But his reflection in a pond looks shaky. In the same way, the illumined one too looks unstable and shaky when he comes into the affairs of the world. If so, you may ask, who is an illumined person and who is an ignorant one? How does one distinguish them? Okay, I shall tell you that. One is a learned person if his sensory organs stay unattached even when his action organs are functioning. Such a person is a liberated person right in this life. He is the ignoramus whose sensory organs stay attached to worldly things even when his action organs are inactive and not working. Such a person is unliberated and stays bound to the world. One can conclude from this that for the dualities of happiness and sorrow or liberation and bondage, the sensory organs are the cause and not the action organs.

"Therefore, though Sukra was liberated by that time, though his sensory organs are unattached to objects, because of the fact that some remainder of the fruits of action had yet to be experienced, the attachment to the earlier body and related processes are going on.

11. BACK TO THE OLD BODY

Vasishta: "Rama! Now let us continue with our main story.

"Observing that Sukra, who is now in the body of a son of a sage, was shaken at the sight of his old dried up body, The God of Time (Death) said in a serious tone as follows:

God of Death: " Oh, Son of Brighu! The purpose of this body that was useful for observing austerities on the banks of the river Samanga is over. Now leave this body and enter into the old body. This is eligible for continued austerities (*tapas*). Continue austerities with this, reach the level of being the Guru for Demons, get liberated in this life, live till the end of the Kalpa. Then get rid of this body also and attain total Liberation! May you both be blessed! I shall leave now."

Vasishta: "Thus saying the God of Time disappeared. Both the son and father were moved at the kindness of the God of Time with tears in their eyes.

"Soon they overcame their feelings. The new Sukra, who already mastered several yogas, could control his mind. Taking help of his knowledge of *Parakayapravesha* (entering into other's body), he entered into his old body, having shed his present body of the son of a sage. Brighu, at the same time sprinkled holy water on the old body of his son. With that, like a dried stick suddenly blooming, his dried up body got back life into it with all the nerves, blood vessels functioning. His body, having put on flesh, was shining like that of a youth in prime. On one side the body of the son of a sage was dropping down without life. On the other side, the body of the son of Brighu, recently reacquiring life, was up with a smile and was bowing to his father.

"Affection for one's own son is ecstatic for anyone. Even a Sage like Brighu too was overwhelmed by it. "Is it wise to think that the physical body of his son was born because of him," he was musing, smiling at himself. Yet he couldn't help being engulfed by affection thinking, "This is my son." He hugged his son tightly and blessed him.

12. CREMATION OF HIS OWN BODY

Vasishta: Soon they recovered themselves from the ecstasy. But the corpse of the sage lying there on the bank of Samanga River posed to be a problem. It chilled their mutual affection a bit.

They thought over it and reached a conclusion that they should follow the precepts of propriety. They gathered together some dried logs and burnt the corpse. Then they stayed there for a long time in meditation. Eventually, Sage Brighu became one of the seven Sages (*Sapta Riśis*). Sukra became the teacher for the Demons."

With this we reached the end of *Bhargava ūpakhyana*. Sage Vasishta himself talks about the symbolism and the principles involved in this story. In order to understand clearly, however, let us make a few observations in our own style.

Vasishta narrated this story only to show that the sustenance of the world is dependent on the mind. The two stories – *Leela Upakhyana* and *Lavana Upakhyana* – told earlier are adequate to prove that. Still he recounted this story as a new one. What is the extra thing in this story over and above what was there in the earlier two stories?

Brighu means a rock slope. In other words a stony surface. No plant can grow out of it. Yet strangely, Sukra was born there. Sukra means semen. It signifies a seed. For a seed to germinate, soil or a suitable womb of a mother is necessary. But this Sukra could bring forth, without the need of any such wombs, an entire heaven. Observing austerities for thousands of years, he could bring into existence the body of a seer's son on the banks of the River Samanga.

The story does not say how and when these were created (*Utpatti*). What we see is only their existence. The existence is so concrete that the body of the son of the seer on the banks of the River Samanga had to be actually burnt to be gotten rid off ! Who burnt it ? The very same person who created it and his creator (father) together. It required two. Who could achieve such strong existence and sustenance? It was Sukra's mind !

Another important point in the story to be noted is the 'death' of Sukra's old body. What is death? If we accept the common understanding, it is the end of 'life'. In this story, Sukra began his fantasy about Heavenly comforts while he was in his old body.

The existence of Heaven started as a dream world, as castles in air. He did not intend to create. Therefore, he did not originate it. Following an Apsarasa who was already in existence by then, he entered into a Heaven that he thought was already in existence. He enjoyed the comforts. He was not aware when the whole thing took a solid shape. He did not know what summation of antecedent impressions (*samskaras*) reinforced his fantasizing, giving rise to a series of births. As new thoughts were intensifying, the mind and the 'life' dependent on that mind lost their need for the old body. Therefore, it was forgotten. His 'life' was running after newer and newer bodies. That's why that 'life' abandoned the old body like a hot brick.

Under normal circumstances, the God of Death will try to take away the life of a *Jiva* (individual) after the culmination of due time. But the individual struggles not to leave the old body. Finally the God of Death succeeds in taking away the 'life.' On this count, was it death for the old body of Sukra? Or no?

If we take that loss of 'life' as death, then it was 'death' for sure. But why should 'life' leave by itself? The God of Death or God of Time has to take it away. In that case, we cannot call it 'death.' But then words like Death, Time, and God were used. What is their meaning?

Nobody dwelt on this analysis. Even Sage Brighu did not do it. He was ready to curse the God of Death under the presumption that what happened there was certainly 'death' and the death was certainly 'caused' by God of Death. This was anger in action. The anger was caused by the sorrow of losing a son. The sorrow was, in turn, caused by his attachment.

Sage Brighu's affection, sorrow and anger coupled with the merit of his past actions were so strong that a Power personified itself in front of Brighu. Because it shone with luminescence, it was referred to as God (*Deva* = self-shining). That Power was the God of Death; that was the God of Time. The God of Death told Brighu that what happened to his son was not death. He also said that the son was alive and living at some place and asked him to go and find. Brighu found that to be true. Brighu couldn't help but be surprised.

The quotidian theory that - "God Brahma creates all bodies, *jīvas* (individual souls) enter into those bodies and after the expiration of some period the God of Death takes away the 'life' leaving the bodies dead" - is turned on its head.

It is not possible to argue that Brahma created the body of the Seer's son on the banks of the River Samanga using His own five elements (*pancha bhūtas*). Nor is it possible to dispense it away saying that it was a body in a dream of Sukra. We cannot call it fiction either. It is like a dream but not a dream. It was like magic, but not magic. Logically, it cannot be a physical body. But it behaved completely as if it was solid. If we examine the series of its antecedent births, we can never arrive at the first birth or who caused the very first birth. Nevertheless, its existence was undoubted. Sage Brighu did not have a worldly explanation for any of these mutually contradictory riddles except for philosophical (*tātvic*) answers. Hence he followed the God of Death obediently.

Another event that stands out in this story is that an individual burns his own discarded body. Instead of saying that it was a body created by him, it is better to say that it was a body that had sustenance due to him. Every one, every day makes his dream body vanish, but doesn't burn it. But Sukra had to burn the body of the seer's son as he was not able to make it disappear. It was so because of the strength of the sustenance of the body.

Earlier in the *Leela Upakhyana*, it was stated that there was no big difference between the physical body and the astral body. It was said that thoughts cause the finer subtle world. If those thoughts were to be more and more dense, then that world would gradually condense to be the gross world. We have to apply the same principle for the body of the seer here.

Then the question arises - whether only some persons like Sukra will have the strength of mind to create such gross bodies? Or ordinary folk like us can also do it? We may jump to say that such strength of mind is possible for only a few austere persons. But Rama and Vasishta discussed this question. We shall note what they say. Let us, hence, follow their discussion.

13. TRUTHFUL ATTAINMENT OF THOUGHTS

Rama: "Master! I heard the story fully. It is quite interesting. Sukra was really great. He could follow an Apsarasa right into Heaven. He desired to enjoy the Heavenly comforts and he did. He desired to rule over countries and he could. He could even perform austerities and liberate himself when he wanted to. Whatever he thought, that took place. Why is it that everyone's desires do not fructify like that?"

Vasishta: "Rama! There are two ways by which one can get one's thoughts fulfilled. One is the fructification of the thoughts coming out of pure mind (*chitta sudhi*). This is also referred to as 'The Power of Truthful Attainment of Thoughts.' The second is that whatever memories of actions swell up in the mind at the time of death, they become a reality. 'The Power of Truthful Attainment of Thoughts' is superior. This is possible for superior *jīvas* like Sukra. Depending on the innate tendencies (*sanskāra*) of the individuals at the time of death, a limited power of such attainment is obtained by others."

Rama: "Sukra too was born like anybody else. What is the reason for his special power?"

Vasishta: "This Sukra performed many meditations in the past Kalpa. Therefore, all the impurities (e.g. likes and dislikes) in his mind have evaporated. That jivi was born for the first time in this Kalpa with a pure mind. Therefore, no new impurities stuck to him. There were no seeds of impurity in his birth. That means he inherited no impurities from his father. There were no impurities acquired from his lineage. Hence his present life was pure and pious. That's why he could get the "Power of Truthful Attainment of Thoughts." The present Brahma selected him for the positions of being an officer of a Planet and Teacher of the Demons. Therefore, nothing that he thinks of can be untrue.
Coming to ordinary folk, there will be at least one impurity in their births out of those we talked about earlier. So there is no scope for them to attain the power of thought fulfillment. Some of them meditate and get rid of their impurities. Then they attain the power of thought fulfillment.

"Many of the ordinary people, depending on the memories they get at the time of death, they enjoy the comforts and sorrows in their subsequent birth. Some of Sukra's births were of this type too. From this we can conclude:

स्वप्नसंकल्पनगरव्यवहाराः परस्परम्।
पृथग्यथा न दृश्यन्ते तथैते संसृतिभ्रमाः ।।

svapnasaṃkalpanagaravyavahārāḥ parasparam|
pṛthagyathā na dṛśyante tathaite saṃsṛtibhramāḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 17, Sloka 10

"All these visible worlds of existence are like dream worlds. Like castles in the air. That is why each person has his/her own world; his/her own imagination and his/her own sorrows and happiness."

14. DREAM ARMY OF SOLDIERS

Rama: "Master! Everything is imagination. We shall accept that. But then how do these imaginations take place? They come out of the impressions. Impressions come from previous experiences. Sukra was born in this Kalpa for the first time. He did not visit Heaven prior to that. Therefore, he could not possibly have had the memories of Heaven! In such a case, how is it possible that he went to Heaven, enjoyed the Heavenly pleasures till his merit diminished, and then went through a series of births? How could this happen?"

Vasishta: "Rama! Formation of impressions is not based merely on prior experience. They can form from what is heard or what is read from books. In Sukra's case, his father's words and teachings from scriptures left him with impressions of Heaven and caused a series of births. It is so in our experience too. Even if we have not seen with our own eyes, we dream of things that we heard with our ears !

"Further, every person is seeing a world in his wakeful state. All of them think that they are all together seeing the same world. It is like the illusion of the soldiers. I shall explain:

"There was a big battle going on. The soldiers were sleeping in the night. Everybody was dreaming about the war. In every soldier's dream, an army was fighting. In truth, each had his dream-army. But when he wakes up, he tells his friends, "I dreamt of ***our army*** fighting." It was not ***"****our army****"*** that he saw in his dream. It was some army similar to his army. But the soldier did not see the difference. It is the same thing with the world seen by all the people. Hence, elders state that 'this world is like a long dream.'"

दीर्घस्वप्नस्त्विदं जगत् *dīrghasvapnastvidaṃ jagat*

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 17, Sloka 26

Rama: "Great Teacher ! You said so previously too! It makes me think. Every person is imagining his world separately. Each person's dream is his own. If that is your stand, will two people's worlds meet at any time even for once? Or don't they? Why I ask this question is because, if my world is like a dream, the teacher whom I meet in this world and who imparts knowledge to me too had to be a part of that dream world. If that is the case, how can that teacher and even his teaching be true ? If that teaching itself is not true, how do I then get liberated? Forget about me, none whosoever, can get liberated. This will be difficult, if one accepts your hypothesis."

15. DO TWO MENTAL CONSTRUCTS MEET ?

Vasishta: "Rama! I shall reply to you in progressive steps. Your question is whether two mental constructs ever meet or not? Do we see two minds merging completely anywhere in the world? Though not usually seen, if two, cent percent pure minds happen to meet, they definitely merge totally. This is because there will be no imaginations in those two minds. Both minds stay in the Ultra Pure Supreme State.

"There are two ways to cognize the mental worlds of their neighbors in the case of those with stained minds. Every living individual has got the Supreme Consciousness in his mind (*antahkarana*) as substratum. If a person can achieve concentration on the Supreme Consciousness within him, then he can link his consciousness with the consciousness in others. Then he can see the mental worlds of that other person. If he cannot achieve linkage with all the mental bodies, he may do it with a specific one. This is the second method. You may think that these two methods are for some Yogis only. The methods are the same for ordinary people or for yogis !

"What happens in the case of ordinary folk is that only such objects, such sites, and such worlds surround him as suitable to facilitate his experiencing of the fruits of his past actions. That is to say only a limited world will be visible to him. In other words, he can cognize only such worlds with his sensory organs. It is not that the other worlds do not exist. He will not be aware of them. In case another individual has some residual experience left out from going through similar places and objects, that individual too will join the same mental world. That is to say that the two individuals enter into each other's worlds depending on the commonality of residual fruits of action to be enjoyed by them. Thus those two minds meet one another. But this is only a partial linkage and not a full-fledged linkage.

"Among common people, there will be some superior persons. They purify their minds following Yoga techniques like Hatha Yoga and learn special techniques like entering into the bodies of others. With the help of this knowledge, they enter other's bodies, senses and also mind. Thus they see the world as seen by the others.

"Many are the ways for two minds to link together. Therefore, there is every chance for the world of a teacher who was liberated but had some residual fruits of action yet to be experienced by him to link with the world of a disciple still bound. Though their two worlds are imaginary, it is possible that the purity of the mind of the teacher affects that of the disciple and thus helps the latter attain full purity.

16. FOUR STATES

Rama: "Master! You repeatedly said that only Consciousness (Brahman) is real; the whole world is an illusory manifestation; a seeker should purify his mind through discrimination, control of senses, and renunciation; and, depending on the purity of the mind, he will obtain wisdom. I do not deny any of these concepts. But at present we are examining the state of the world through *Bhargava Upakhyana*. Does the whole experience through a series of lives of Bhrgava come under "*jāgrat*' (wakeful) state? Or does it count as a dream state?

"I raise this question because all objects are perceived directly whether in a wakeful state or dream state. The appearance of objects being the same, how can one distinguish the two states ? How can anybody call one as true and the other as untrue? Unless we resolve this dilemma, we would not know which was the true experience of Bhargava."

Vasishta: "Rama! Let us examine upfront the sleep and dream states. In fact, there is not much difference between the two. If the objects are stable for a longer period, we call it a wakeful state. Otherwise, we call it a dream state. If we recall that we saw the same objects yesterday (possibility for re-cognition), we describe them as substances of wakeful state. If that possibility is not there, we call them substances of dream state. There is no further distinction. Whether it is a dream object or an object in the wakeful state, experiential effects like sorrow and happiness are the same in either state.

"However, the states are not merely two; there are four, viz. Wakeful state, Dream state, Deep Sleep (*suśupti*) and Fourth (*Turiya*) state. These relate to the individual self (*jīva)* (*a*) and not to the body. Let us know a bit about these states.

"We have a body. It consists of senses. There are nerves in them. In their background is the mind. There is life-force in it. The memories from the past actions stimulate the mind. The five winds, *Prana*, *Apana* etc. collaborate with the stimulation. This is the normal condition of our body. "When the effects of the past actions combined with the five winds stimulate the life-force, it crosses the mind, travels through the nerves and stops short of the senses. Under that condition, a world is perceived by us. We experience happiness and sorrow. But it does not stay long. That is the Dream state.

"If the stimulus is stronger, the life-force crosses the nerves too and enters the senses. Then again we see objects. We experience a world as well as happiness and sorrow. These stay for a longer period. We call this Wakeful state.

"Life-force gets tired of this movement. The stimulus inside too reduces. The memories of the past actions do not spring up. The five winds do not move. The life-force stays totally inert. It is almost pure consciousness only. This state is called Deep Sleep (*suśupti*).

"The life-force mulls a little over the basic truths (*tatva*) during Wakeful state and practices a little Yoga. If lucky, then it attains self-realization. When self-realization is achieved, the realization is not lost, even if the life-force continues to be in the Wakeful, Dream or Deep Sleep states due to the residual effects of past actions. That stable state of self-realization is the Fourth (*Turiya*) state. This is the supreme state.

"We can also describe in a different manner the change of one state into another.

"Let us start with *suśupti*. I already said that the Prana etc winds did not move in this state. The reason for this is that the impressions of past actions do not sprout up. After some time, however, they would. The Prana etc. winds get imbalanced. This imbalance causes a perturbation in the life-force. A perturbed life-force assumes the form of "mind." Then I-consciousness sparks into it. It starts viewing the newly formed mind as different from itself. This I-consciousness is called "Ego." The I-consciousness, viewing the mind as different from itself, is called "perturbation" (**संक्षोभं** *samkśobham*). As the perturbation grows, the feeling that there is a sky comes up. This is described as "Travel in space." When once the existence of space is conceived, scope to facilitate movement appears followed by actual movements. The movement slowly enters the nerves.

"There are some chemicals in the nerves. A flash (**स्फुरण** *sphuraṇa*) of a feeling of water springs up when the mucosal liquid in there is seen. On viewing pus, blood etcetera, flashes of a feel of sun, rain and so on are experienced. Summation of all these experiences is the Dream state. By that time, the individual self (*jīva*) does not yet cross the nerves and enter into the senses. When he enters the senses, the strength of senses gives him the experience of the outer world. This is the Wakeful state.

"From this sequence, it can be seen that the wakeful and dream state experiences are flashes of feelings (**स्फुरण** *sphuraṇa*). A firm understanding of this by the intellect is Turiya state.

"Rama, I narrated so much about these states because it helps to comprehend the nature of the mind. The mind is the one producing dream-objects, as well as the objects of wakeful state. But we cannot claim that the objects are nonexistent, because they are seen and also they give the experience of happiness and sorrow. They cannot be dubbed as unreal. But you cannot also say that they exist because they were not derived from any raw materials other than mind. We cannot describe them as real. Therefore, elders describe these objects and their causative mind as "different from existent and nonexistent." In other words, they are neither existent nor inexistent. It is a strange state different from either.

17. MIND IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE STATES

Vasishta: "An iron ball is thrown into fire, becomes red hot. In the same way, when *jīva* forces the mind into whatever, the mind becomes that. Because the mind is *jīva* one can say that *jīva* becomes that. That means he assumes the same form that he thinks.

"Such a malleable mind can manifest in two styles. One is the individualized style – i.e. one's own mind. The other is the integrated mind – the integrated mind of all creatures. What is strange is that the integrated mind is the clay and the individual mind is the potter, if we compare this illusory world to a pot. The individual mind is the author, the doer. The integrated mind is the material cause (*upādāna karana*). The world is the effect generated from the material cause by that doer.

"If there are excessive pots in our house, there is no use fighting with the clay. If you control the potter, only then the process of pots being made is affected. So also, if the individual limits the mind, controls it, the illusion of the world will diminish, Yogic powers will be obtained. Knowledge of self will dawn.

"You may ask how knowledge of the self will come about if the mind is controlled. That doubt is unnecessary. The mind is the individual (*jīva*) and the individual *jīva* is the mind (*jīva* is also referred to as *purusha, atma, jīvātma* and so on). Man is the mind. Man is not his body!

"Because this is the truth, Sukra could get all those births by his mind. He did not get them with his body. Any experience obtained with the mind is different from being existent and nonexistent! It is just a delusion!!

"You questioned whether the experience of Bhargava was a dream or a wakeful state. Because we already said that the difference was only a function of time, we need not discuss it further. Whether it was a dream state or wakeful state, both are equally illusory. Therefore, what is important is that you focus your mind on "existing" (Real) thing."

Rama: "Great Teacher! All your discussion is centered on mind. What was there to start with was Ultra Pure Consciousness only. It did not have any pollution in it at the very beginning. Then how did the mind, a stain originate from it?"

From this question, it was clear that Rama did not have any more questions on *Bhargava Upakhyana* and therefore, he diverted the discussion to another topic. Vasishta thought of dealing with this discussion in a forthcoming chapter on *nirvāna*.

Hence, Vasishta replied with a counter question.

Vasishta: "Rama! It would have been better if you raised this question after experiencing Pure Consciousness at least once. It is not there in your experience. Why do you ask about something that is not based on your experience ? What you have in your experience is the stained consciousness. Therefore, our discussion has to be around this experiential state.

"The central point of our discussion is mind. Let us examine how this has come about. What everybody experiences commonly is consciousness with stains. Or, let us say, that Consciousness is modified (changed) and has become nature. What is the description for Nature (*prakriti*) ? The first modification that is the root for all future changes is nature.

"If consciousness shelters 'thought' (*manana dharma*), it becomes mind. If it supports viewing, it becomes the eye. If it supports hearing, it becomes the ear. In a similar way, by supporting a particular functional faculty, the consciousness is shaping up as that particular sensory or action organ.

"Moreover, each person thinks of consciousness in his own way. The source for all thinking is the Pure Consciousness. But whoever thinks of it in whatever way, it appears to him in that way. If you move about in a garden of Jasmines, you get the smell of jasmines. If you are in a rose garden, you smell roses, though the air is the same. The air is odorless. So also is the Consciousness. Because of this fact, there are so many theories on the nature of Consciousness."

18. DIFFERENT THEORIES

Rama: "An object that is real should look the same to anybody. If it looks same, the expression of it also should be the same. How could so many theories originate?"

Vasishta: "Rama! There is no rule that an object should look the same to all people. Depending on the impressions of his past actions, each person's sensory and action organs are formed. His thoughts and deeds take shape depending on his organs. Because of this, the person earns again sin or merit from his actions. In other words, the first action was the cause for the mind. Later it is the mind that is the cause for action. "Let me clarify how it works. Action and mind are like a flower and its fragrance. They have no existence of their own separate from one another.

"Individuals (*jīvas*) having a mind that is spurred by action, see things in consonance with their actions and mind. Believing firmly that their way of looking is correct, they try to possess those things. With a firm belief in their own viewpoint, they struggle more and more to possess them. Because of this struggle, the same type of karma piles up. Their conviction too will go up with this. With this conviction, new theories are propounded and propagated. I shall show through a few examples that all such theories are no more than a reflection of the mindset of the persons pronouncing them.

"Out of the extant viewpoints, the theory of Kapila is worthy to some extent. It is the Samkhya philosophy. The followers of this theory have a discriminating mind. They took the Great Statement of the Vedas, "*Tatvamasi*", and discussed the meaning of the words '*tat*' (that) and '*tvam*' (you). They determined the meaning for the word '*tvam*' (you) as per the Vedas. When they came to '*tat*', however, they could not accept the Vedic interpretation. They modified it a bit and proposed that Nature and "Purusha" are different, but both are Real. They theorized that understanding this itself is liberation.

"There are Vedantins. For them Vedas are the supreme authority; but not their own thinking. They decided that the entire visible universe is Brahman as per the Vedas. They theorized that realizing this truth experientially is itself salvation and that there is no other *Brahmalok* (superior world of Brahma) to be attained. You may say that there is no contribution of their thought in this. It is true that they do not have any contribution to their thought as far as the goal is concerned. But they evolved a lot of differences in the path to be followed, works to be done etc.

"And there are those that believe in Pure Intelligence (*vijnāna)*. They described salvation as entering into Buddhahood. They prescribed control of external and internal senses (*indriyās)* as the path. Then there are Arhatas or Jains. All of them defined salvation in accordance with their own thoughts and prescribed ways and means as suited to their theories."

[***Note:*** Kapila, Vedanta, Pure Intelligence (*vijnāna*), Arhata philosophies were mentioned by name in the original text. It was stated that all these were creations of the human mind. No preference was shown to any of them.

स्वां दृष्टिं प्रविवृण्वन्ति स्वैरेव नियमभ्रमैः ।

svāṃ dṛṣṭiṃ pravivṛṇvanti svaireva niyamabhramaiḥ |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 21, Sloka 29

"Each propounds what he views as a theory, formulating it, in accordance with the rules of his own fancy."

Valmiki, the author (of Yoga Vasishta) repeated this statement many times as a song. From this it is clear that the author was not opinionated about different approaches of Vedantins. Even though the original author mentioned the names of four philosophies, he did not discuss the principles of any of them. The commentator of the work, Sri Sri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami briefly described the main concepts of the four schools of thought. These are given below:

Kapila Philosophy (Samkhya): There are three principal elements in this view. These are (i) *Puruśa*; (ii) *Prakriti* (Nature); and (iii) *jīva* (individual). *Puruśa* has the attributes of Wisdom and Consciousness. But he does not act and remains merely a witness. Prakriti is made up of the three qualities (*triguanas*). It is inert. But it is the creator. Both these are permanent. *jīva* thinks that he is different because of his association with nature. There are many such *jīvas*. Salvation for the *jīva* is to realize that he is no different from the Purusha through discretionary wisdom obtained from practices of yoga.

Vedanta Philosophy: According to this view, only the Supreme Brahman is Unchanging, Real and Permanent. Dependent on it and enveloping it is Nescience (*avidya*) or Illusion (*māya*). Illusion is neither real nor unreal. It is both existence-inexistence. Because of this *māya,* the universe, individual (*jīva*) and Eswara (Lord) are coming into existence through illusory superimposition. Obtaining knowledge of Discrimination, Nescience can be gotten rid off by the *jiva*.

Then the three entities – the universe, *jīva* and Eswara disappear and the *jīva* merges totally into the Supreme Brahman. Knowledge is the only tool for this. Self- introspection is the method to obtain knowledge. Purity of mind is the way for self- introspection. Yoga and good deeds are the process to achieve a pure mind.

Vijnāna Philosophy (Buddhism): Pure Intelligence (*vijnāna*) is the final Reality according to this philosophy. All other objects are ephemeral. Not realizing this truth binds one to the world (*samsāra*). To enter into the Buddhahood is *nirvāna*. Various methods are prescribed in this philosophy for obtaining Nirvana. Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Yogacharya, Madhyamika, Hinayana, Mahayana, Vijnanavada etc. are all branches of Buddhism.

Aarhata Philosophy: There are seven main parts in this school of thought. Therefore, they refer to their philosophy as "The Sevenfold Approach (*Saptabhanginaya*)." The seven layers are:

i) Jīva	- His size is the same as the size of the body.
ii) Lifeless things	- Stones etc.
iii) Asrava	- Indriyas (organs)
iv) Samvaras	- Yama, Niyama etc.
v) Nirjara	- Austerities like shaving head etc.
vi) Bondage	- Birth and Death
vii) Salvation	- To travel up and up forever in space beyond the world.

There is another Sevenfold Approach too.

(i) *Syadasti :* It could exist or it could exist with great difficulty. (*Syath* does not stand for a verb here. It is an unchanging Sanskrit word form (called *avyaya*). It means 'a little' or 'somehow' or 'with great difficulty.' *Syadasti* applies to all the above seven components and implies that nothing can be said for certain about any of them; they could be or they may not be. One has to apply it in the same way with reference to the following six words.)

(ii) *Syannasti :* may not be.

(iii) *Syadasti cha nasti cha :* may be or may not be.

(iv) *Syadavaktavyah :* may not be possible to express.

(v) Syadastichaavak tavyascha : may be but inexpressible.

(vi) Syannasti chaa vaktavyascha : may not be but inexpressible.

(vii) Syadasti nasti-chaavaktavyascha : may be, may not be but inexpressible

The existence of so many theories indicates that Reality or Truth is too subtle and very difficult to grasp. Sage Vasishta says that all the above schools of thought are very strange imaginations as could be seen from their varied approaches.

We have already mentioned in Yoga Vasishta - Book 1 (*Vairagya Prakarana*) that from time immemorial such philosophical concepts emerged and that they would disappear for some time and reemerge later. Therefore, we need not discuss them again. After digressing a bit on such intellectual debates, Sage Vasishta continued his discourse.

19. SEVEN STEPS FOR PURIFICATION OF MIND

Vasishta: "Rama !

स्वां दृष्टिं प्रविवृण्वन्ति स्वैरेव नियमभ्रमैः ।

svāṃ dṛṣṭiṃ pravivṛṇvanti svaireva niyamabhramaiḥ |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 21, Sloka 29

"All these people postulate theories based on their own imaginations and rub them on the heads of others, as I told you already. I proved that all these are mere delusions. The reason for these delusions is contemplation on the Consciousness with a stained mind. As the mind is stained, even though Consciousness is pure, Consciousness appears to them as stained. Hence it is necessary that one has to purify one's own mind first if one wishes to look at a pure entity in a pure way.

"Therefore, Rama, the steps for purifying your mind are:

1. Cut short the mental vibrations.
2. Rid yourself of the levels of ignorance.
3. Reach levels of wisdom.
4. Keep remembering that the entire visible world is merely a different form of the Supreme Consciousness.
5. Understand that nothing other than Supreme Consciousness exists.
6. Stop seeking sensory pleasures.
7. Practicing all the above, emasculate the impressions of past actions.

"Rama! One who reaches this state is a *Jnani* released from birth and death.

वालाग्रलक्षभागात्तु कोटिशः परिकल्पितात् ।
अहं सूक्ष्म इति व्यापी यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।।

vālāgralakṣabhāgāttu koṭiśaḥ parikalpitāt |
ahaṃ sūkṣma iti vyāpī yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 22, Sloka 26

"Make a hundred thousand parts of the extreme end-piece of the hair on an animal's tail. Take one small piece and divide it into ten million parts. I am as small as that fine piece. Though I am so miniscule, I am spread everywhere. Whoever can see this, is the real seer. "It means that whoever has that knowledge, whoever got such an experience, he is truly the Realized person, *jnāni*."

Using the refrain "*Yah pasyati sa pasyati*", Sage Vyasa described the qualities of a Realized person till the end of this Chapter. These things were also mentioned in the second Chapter on Behavior of A Liberated Person (*Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana*) while describing *ṣama* (control of mind). We will not repeat them here.

Later in the 23rd Sarga, the qualities of a man liberated right in this life itself were depicted. In this context, the life of a liberated king named *jīvanmukta* was captivatingly described in enchanting poetic beauty, metaphorically comparing his body to a city-state, integrating the behavior of a liberated person with the king's rule.

In the next Sarga (Sarga 24), Sage Vasishta returned to the questions of a Seeker. He says that for an ordinary person who is not yet liberated, the body itself is a hellish empire, the sense organs are the enemies and so on. The substance of the narration is that a pure mind is the true friend of a seeker and a stained mind is his enemy.

`Strictly speaking, *Bhargava Upakhyana* of the Chapter on Sustenance ended with the 16th Sarga. From the 17th to 24th Sargas, Sage Vasishta commented on this story from a variety of angles. Summing up the discussion at the end of the 24th Sarga, he addressed Rama saying, "Rama ! Do not be controlled by the mind like an ordinary plebeian. Conquer the sense organs, which are the enemies and rein in the mind. May the fate of *dāma vyāla* and *kata* not fall on you! May you be blessed as *bhīma,* bhāsa and *ḍridha*!"

Such blessings were a style followed by the authors in the olden days to introduce the forthcoming topic by a reference to certain names in the blessings. It is usual for the main character to ask for the details of the story the names allude to and for the narrator to continue his story-telling. Sage Vasishta followed this method into the 25th Sarga with the story of "*dāma vyāla* and *kata* ."

20. Dāma, Vyāla and Kata UPAKHYANA

A seeker, even after he attains a certain level with considerable purity of mind, has to keep a constant watch not to yield to egoism or succumb to the sensory pleasures. Otherwise, he would slowly wreck himself and will totally fall from grace. If he acts without being affected by egoism, his mind will not be polluted. Sage Vasishta told the following story taking these two opposing effects into consideration. It is better to keep this fact at the back of our mind as we proceed further with the story.

Vasishta: "Long long ago, there used to live one demon by name Sambarasura in the nether worlds. Sambara means water. If illusions were gems, he was like an ocean for such gems. His strength, wealth and comforts and pleasures were boundless. He had a sandalwood plantation. There were no snakes in that, however. In his town, the Full Moon had to appear even on a New Moon's day!

"Once Sambarasura invaded the gods and vanquished them. He looted all their riches. With that booty, he enlarged his military forces and immersed himself in all sorts of pleasures without any fear.

"When he was thus lost in his enjoyment and was careless, the gods invaded his land. Sambara ordered his warriors to fight with the gods, but he himself continued to live in his pleasures in an inebriated state. Taking advantage, the gods killed all the warriors of Sambara. Waking up to this loss, Sambara was raging mad. He attacked Heaven all- alone by himself. The gods, who were fighting the warriors of Sambara so far, trembled when Sambara attacked their land. That was because the gods knew better the strength of the illusory ocean of Sambara than his own followers.

"The gods thought over and disappeared from their own city. Sambara could not find anybody, even an insect there. He could not understand what happened. He went around all the houses. Not even a single god could be seen. He robbed every valuable thing in the houses and then burnt them. Then he cooled down a bit. He waited for some more days. Still he did not find any gods. He then developed new warriors from his army, assigned the towns of the gods to them and returned to his nether lands.

"No sooner than he left, the gods regrouped, assaulted the demon warriors in the towns of Heaven, finished them off and escaped. When Sambara came to know of this, he seethed with anger and searched for the gods all over. But it was in vain. He could not locate the gods. He waited again for some time, appointed a new set of warriors to look after the towns in Heaven and returned home. Waiting for a suitable opportunity, the gods struck again and killed all the demon warriors. It happened this way repeatedly several times. In the process, Sambara's forces were decimated.

"Sambarasura thought over his predicament and developed a plan mustering all his powers. He created three Demons using his magical prowess. The first was named 'दाम' "dāma." dāma means thread. Sambara felt that dāma could tie down the enemy soldiers with the rope (of threads) and render them helpless. dāma is derived from "**दमयतीति दामः**" 'Damayatīti dāmaḥ.'. The second Demon was named '**व्याल**' "vyāla." vyāla means a snake. Sambara expected that Vyaala could bite all the enemy soldiers and kill them. vyāla is derived from '**विशेशेन आ समौतात् आलतीति व्यालः - आल परिव्याप्तौ**' '*viśexena ā samautāt ālatīti vyālaḥ - āla parivyāptau*.'

"He named the third Demon as '**कट**' "*Kata*." Kata means a mat or a shield like a mesh. Sambarasura hoped that Kata would cover his soldiers and protect them from enemy weaponry. Kata is derived from '**कटति आव्रुणोतीति कट्ः**' '*kaṭati āvruṇotīti kaṭḥ.*'

"Sambara appointed these three as the new Army Chiefs, though there were a number of chiefs in his army already. The difference between those earlier chiefs and the three new chiefs was like that between a mosquito and an elephant -

1. The new Chiefs do not have any past impressions or effects of actions from past births carried over to them into the present life.
2. How were they born then? Sambarasura was born as he had some effects of past actions still left out to be experienced. The new chiefs were born because of Sambara's wizardry. So they are like the creations of a magician. Normally persons created through magic have a very short life. However, the life for these three are slightly longer. That's all the difference. In a way, they are comparable to sparks emanating out of a fire called Sambarasura.

3. How could they perform any acts in this life in the absence of residual effects of past lives? They perform actions as per the doctrine of "Andhaparampara." It means they blindly imitate others that are around. Things work out more by fluke for them. Their actions resemble the actions of little children who are half-asleep.
4. They have no prior knowledge of wars, invasions, attacks, escapes or killings. Dualities like success and defeat, righteousness and evil action, yes and no are unknown to them. They know neither fear nor any doubt. They were born with one quality - to obey the intentions that arise in the mind of Sambarasura. As a result, whenever they notice the enemies of Sambarasura, they could recollect their magic skills triggered by the feeling of enmity.
5. Yogis with their powers of yoga can create many bodies so that they can fulfill the suffrage of the residual effects of their past actions at one go (like parallel processing). Sambarasura did something similar. But as these (the three new army chiefs magically created) are bodies emerging out of anger and hatred, they could not dissolve the effects of past actions. They are useful only to compound the actions and thereby the effects.

"Sambarasura tested the strength of the three warriors he created. He felt very happy seeing them. He reorganized his army, appointed *dāma, vyāla and kata* as Chiefs and sent them over to attack Heaven. As expected, *dāma* could tie up all the gods. *vyāla* hit them with his sword. Kata took care to see that his side of the army did not suffer losses. The gods were vanquished and had to run for their life. *dāma, vyāla and kata* chased them. But the gods disappeared without being caught. After looking for them for some time, the Demon chiefs returned to their own land.

21. BRAHMA'S ADVICE

"Saved by the skin of their teeth, the gods thought over and approached Brahma for advice. Brahma listened to their plight and told them as follows:

Brahma: "Oh, gods! You have been fighting quite vigilantly. But *dāma, vyāla and kata* are not defeated. First you must understand why it is so. If you understand the reason, you can work out a plan to defeat them. So I shall tell you why. Please listen to me carefully.

"Whoever does not have any impressions of past actions carried forward into their mind, they are composed in their intellect and are balanced. They do not have either happiness or sorrow. Nobody can conquer such persons in this world. In contrast to this, if a person is tied up with the impressions of the past, even a child can upset him irrespective of any scholarly knowledge acquired by him. It will be possible to defeat such a person at one time or the other.

"Out of all the effects from the past actions, the feeling that "I am the body" is a very strong one. This is referred to as "Impression of Body-Self Identity." Also called as "Misconception of identity of Body and self." Whatever name is given, it means the same , to think, "I am the body." This is the first impression. From there, it gets enlarged as "my senses are me, this spouse and kids are mine" and so on.

You may ask what is wrong with the impressions of the past actions. If ever there is an entity other than the Supreme Consciousness, then the thought that "I am that entity" could be valid. But as a matter of fact that is not the position. There is nothing other than the Supreme Consciousness. In such a case, would it not be incorrect to carry the impression that those other entities are I?

"The long and short of it is that only those who carry the impressions based on unreality can be vanquished. The three, *dāma, vyāla and kata* you were referring to, have almost no impressions of past actions carried over to them. Therefore, they do not have the feelings of 'me and mine'. Depending on the situation arising, their organs are acting in a timely and befitting manner. They stay aloof as mere witnesses. There is no limit to their inner strength (*antahsāra).*

"The only way to overcome the situation is, you have to think of a method to make them, by hook or by crook, carry the impressions of past actions. There is no other way. Hence the method to follow is for you to continue your war in a manner that provokes new thoughts in them about worldly affairs, self-protection, the pleasures of senses etc. It may take a hundred thousand years for the new thoughts to germinate in them. Sambara has also got that much longevity. At the end of that time, the new thoughts will consolidate in them. You can guess what would happen after that.

"Speaking thus, Brahma disappeared. The gods could grasp the situation well. They waited for an opportune time to seize the Demons. This time they openly declared a war. Demons from every nook and corner gathered and fought under the leadership of *dāma, vyāla and kata*. The battles were furious. There were floods of blood all over.

22. APING THE GODS

Vasishta: "Just at the time when it appeared that the gods were winning, the gods stopped the war, appealed for truce and raised white flags. They sent huge gifts to *dāma, vyāla and kata*. The three Demon leaders responded favorably to the truce. But the terms of peace led to serious arguments and real war started all over again. This time the gods waged covert wars. Even then, they had to flee. Yet, they sent some divine damsels as gifts. The war ceased for some time. Unexpectedly it resumed again. Each side was trying to cheat the other. As millennia of years thus went by with the war going on, new thoughts did emerge in *dāma, vyāla and kata*. They could see how the gods, who drank the elixir of immortality, were taking care of their own bodies. The three Demons got the thought that they too should take good care of their bodies.

"The Demon trio understood how much the gods were struggling for the pleasures of the senses. Similar desires arose in them. They observed how the gods were cheating. Deceit took root in them. They saw the gods running away to escape death.

The three Demons too were now scared of death. With time, *dāma, vyāla and kata* were like any other Demon warriors. Consequently in the next battle, they were totally defeated. It's their turn to run away. Their army went helter-skelter. The gods were pleased with themselves that they could win over *dāma, vyāla and kata* much earlier than the hundred thousand years predicted by Brahma.

"As the news of their defeat reached Sambarasura, he was furious. He resented that the very three brave Demons created by him expending all his strength of wizardry became so naïve. He shouted fiercely that they should be caught and tied up. He searched in all directions for them. Scared of the ruckus, *dāma* and the others ran away. Yet they were clueless where to go. But because of the culture imbibed by them in the company of other demons, they ran towards hell. There they felt an affinity towards the scary-looking soldiers of the Hell (*Yamakinkaras*). The Demon trio sought refuge under them. The *Yamakinkaras* assured them of protection, hid them in their houses and saved them from Sambarasura.

"*dāma, vyāla and kata* saved, thus wondered how to lead their life. Fortunately for them, the *Yamakinkaras* considered them to be diligent. Three elderly *Yamakinkaras* offered their daughters in marriage to the trio. They also arranged some jobs for the trio. As thousands of years thus went by, attachment to body, family, friends, their land and so on grew around them like a huge web.

"Once Yamadharma Raja (the King of Hell and Death) came unannounced in disguise without any royal pomp and glory for an inspection of his city. *dāma, vyāla and kata* were substituting their fathers-in-law in the duties at that time. Without realizing that it was King Yama himself that had come, the trio behaved arrogantly in their usual manner. Yamadharma Raja was furious at this. He made enquiries about the three. For their wrongs, he threw them along with their relatives into the severest part of the hell. The punishments were severe and several. They were burnt in waist deep fires. They were fried in boiling oil. Their heads were smashed against rocks. Even then they did not die.

It went on like that for a long time.

"The Daama trio had their birth in the community of demons. They had a relationship with *Yamakinkaras*. They had to suffer the punishments in Hell. All this was not for nothing. They became Jailors in charge of punishing criminals in their next birth. Committing injustices in that life, they were born as crows afterwards. Later they were born as eagles. Further, they were born as parrots. Later they were born as pigs, and sheep and then as worms.

"Rama! *dāma, vyāla and kata* were reborn many times. Presently they are living as little fish in a dirty cesspool in a dense forest with frequent forest-fires in Kashmir. They are hanging between life and death and passing their time as living corpses.

"Rama! I narrated this story to show how befallen *dāma, vyāla and kata* were, though they started off their lives with almost no impressions of past actions impinging on them. Behold the contrast! Where is the leadership of the army chiefs that could shake up even the gods and where is the life of a fish in a cesspool?

Where is the Reality of a mind with no I-consciousness and where is the polluted intellect full of egoism that invites onto itself repeated births ? The reason for such a great fall is the absence of discriminating wisdom. What is that discriminating wisdom? It is to realize the fact that the mighty tree of the world (*samsara*) germinates from the seedling of egoism.

अहङ्कारपिशाचार्ता दामव्यालकटास्त्रयः ।
गताः सत्तामसन्तोऽपि मायामाहात्म्यदानवाः ।।

ahaṅkārapiśācārtā dāmavyālakaṭāstrayaḥ |
gatāḥ sattāmasanto'pi māyāmāhātmyadānavāḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 31, Sloka 9

"To start with, there was no beingness for *dāma, vyāla and kata*. They did not exist. Because of the power of *māya* (wizardry), all the three got beingness. They got sustenance. Consumed by the devil of egoism, all the three were trapped in sorrow. They were carried away by the flow of *Samsara*.

"Rama, I told you this story to caution you from such a sorry state befalling on you. Hence, I bless you that the fate of *dāma, vyāla and kata* should not befall on you!"

23. NONEXISTENT EXISTENCE

Rama: "Great Teacher! While discussing, you said,

गता स्सत्ता मसन्तोओपि मायामाहात्म्यदानवाः

gatā ssattā masantoopi māyāmāhātmyadānavāḥ."

"The three Demons who had no beingness in the beginning, had subsequently obtained beingness. How can that be possible?

ना सतोओ विद्यते भावः नाभावोओ विद्यते सतः.

"nā satoo vidyate bhāvaḥ nābhāvoo vidyate sataḥ."

"For which there is no beingness, there can never be any existence. And for that which has beingness, it can never be nonexistent.

"In other words, whatever is not there, it is never there. Whatever is there, will never go away. Is it not the rule? If such is the case, how could the three Demons who had no existence get existence later on?"

[Note: The sentence, "*nā satoo vidyate bhāvaḥ nābhāvoo vidyate sataḥ*" also appears in Bhagavad-Gita (Chapter II, Sloka 16) as it is. This sentence even proved to be quite tough for the Three Great Acharyas – Sankara, Madhwa and Ramanuja when they were writing their commentaries on Gita. Even so, we cannot say that one author or the other plagiarized this sentence. It is quite common to find same or similar sentences appearing in different scriptures of Vedanta. Let us now take up the reply given by SageVasishta to Rama's question.]

Vasishta: "Oh, yes. That is our position too. When a thing that is already there in a very subtle form becomes gross for some reason, then it is said to have been "born." A thing that is gross first becomes subtle later for some reason, it is said to have been "dead." In my opinion, the meaning we can give to the words, "Born and Dead" is only this much. Show me an example if there is anything contrary to this -- something that was not there is newly born. Or give me an example of something that was there but totally gone. Then I can agree."

Rama: "There is no need for me to give an example. You yourself have been giving one ! People like us have existence and people like Daama trio did not have existence as they were born of wizardry, as you said. What you said too looks quite reasonable. Our existence is directly perceivable. To say that *dāma, vyāla and kata* were born out of wizardry implies that they were not there. You showed in your story the birth of those three who were not there. From this you have clearly indicated that there is a difference between those three and us. What other example is needed than what you yourself have given?"

Vasishta: "Rama! It is true that I said that *dāma, vyāla and kata* were born of wizardry. But I have not discussed how people like us are born. Just as water has come into existence into a mirage, so also *dāma, vyāla and kata* were born into this world. Even you and I are also born in the same way. I have not discussed this because, unless a clear understanding of the logic is attained, a teacher should not rush up to teach the aphorism, "*Brahma satyam; jagat mithya (*Brahman is Real and the universe is unreal*)*." If he does so, the ignoramus will not understand. On the top of it they will make fun of such statements.

"From a discussion on the basis of logic, a question may come to your mind. "If *dāma, vyāla and kata* were born because of māya (Wizardry), how were we born?"

"You have that doubt; but you have no answer. A person in that state is called '**किञ्चिद्ज्ञ** *kiñcidjña*' – one who knows a little. I am giving this exposition for the sake of such people only. I said so in the first Chapter on Renunciation (Vairagya) . What I said there was, "**नात्यौत मज्ञो नोतज्ञः सो स्मिन् शस्त्रेधिकारवान्**" "*nātyauta majño notajñaḥ so smin śastredhikāravān* ." It means he is neither fully knowing nor fully unknowing. I said that my teaching is for such people.

"Because this question has come to your mind, I am giving my response. We are born exactly the same way as *dāma, vyāla and kata* . They were also as much born as we are. Scriptures, teachings, Great Sages – are all establishing this as fact."

Rama: "If all of us are like *dāma, vyāla and kata*, if we do not have a birth, how are all this world, so many living creatures, genealogies and series of births seen?"

Vasishta: "One person saw on waking up that some balls of hair were flying around in the sky and he was also surrounded by such balls. He chided the ladies in the house saying that they were throwing balls of hair all around the house when they combed hair to make plaits. Tired of his shouting at them, they took him to an eye doctor. The doctor examined his eyes and declared that the person was suffering from night-blindness and that's why he kept seeing balls of hair all around.

"Now you analyze your experience from the angle of that eye patient. He saw the balls of hair directly all around. Therefore, he feels that the balls were real. But people close to him (his well wishers) like the doctor do not agree. For, a ball of hair to be born out of the sky is not acceptable to our intellect. The experience of healthy persons with good eyesight around too does not support this. Therefore, even if the person with a visual defect sees balls of hair and feels certain that they are real, one has to say that the balls were unreal.

"In the same way, all ordinary people, suffering from the disease of nescience, see the world directly in their experience. The Vedas that are well wishers to everybody do not accept this. The existence of the world cannot be rationalized. The experiential knowledge of the self-knowing persons too is contrary to the ordinary experience. Therefore, it is inevitable to accept that this world is visible in spite of being inexistent! Hence, Rama, we are also just like *dāma, vyāla and kata* .

24. WE ARE EQUALLY ILLUSORY

Vasishta: "We are classifying *dāma, vyāla and kata* as one group and Rama and Vasishta as another group and examining which group has existence. Get the spotlight closer. Rama thinks, "If somebody is non-existing, possibly Vasishta could be that non-existent. But, I am real, for sure." Vasishta too thinks in the same way. If every living creature in the world thinks in the same way, how does one establish the truth? Let us proceed logically.

"It was a peak hot summer day. The place was a desert. The time was mid-noon. One sees a river-like body in the distance. An experienced traveler decided that it was not a water-body but a mirage. But the eye continuously sees the flow of water. The accompanying boy asks, "Where from the water has come into the mirage?" What reply would you give him? You would say to him, "There is no water at all in it. The sunlight itself appears as water. That's all." Don't you do so? In the same way, what appears, as Vasishta, Rama, Peter or John, me, you and all things around are nothing but Supreme Consciousness. There is no other thing whatsoever. If the Supreme Consciousness appears as objects outside you, we call it "the world." The state of seeing something like that is "being bound.When the Supreme Consciousness exists without any external form, we name it as Pure Consciousness or the Substratum. We call this state as liberation (*ṃokśa*).

"Based on the above, are "being bound" and "being liberated" two states? No. They are notional states. Why did we imagine it like that? It is only to help our understanding we invoked two states. Just as we distinguished sunlight and water as if they are two separate things in order to explain a mirage, in the same way, we proposed here two states to instruct about the Self.

Therefore, Rama,

सर्वत्र सर्वमिदमस्ति यथानुभूतं नो किंचन क्वचिदिहास्ति न चानुभूतम् ।
शान्तं सदेकमिदमाततमित्थमास्ते संत्यक्तशोकभयमेदमतस्त्वमास्स्व ।।

sarvatra sarvamidamasti yathānubhūtaṃ
no kiṃcana kvacidihāsti na cānubhūtam |
śāntaṃ sadekamidamātatamitthamāste
saṃtyaktaśokabhayamedamatastvamāssva ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 31, Sloka 47

"There are two approaches to decipher Reality.

"One viewpoint is that the entire visible world is Supreme Brahman only. That means, this world comes into form because of a series of superimpositions on Brahman. The sequence of the superimpositions is as follows: the Unmanifested (*avyakta*) results from a superimposition of Maya (nescience or ignorance) on Supreme Brahman. Intellectual Principle (*mahat*) will result from a superimposition of *māya* on the Unmanifested. The result of the next superimposition of *māya* is I-consciousness (*ahankāra*). Then follow the five elements (*panca bhutās*) and finally the visible world, as a result of the five elements. In other words, whatever we experience everywhere and in every way is Supreme Consciousness. This is called the "View of Superimpositions (*adhyaropa driśti)*."

"In the second viewpoint too, there is no entity anywhere. Nor is there any experience whatsoever. The five elements (*panca bhutās*) are the cause for all the visible physical objects. But compared to effect, cause is more real, as cause precedes the effect. Therefore, the visible world is unreal and the *panca bhutās* have to be real. This is Step One in our Process of Elimination. The purpose of the Process is to move gradually towards truth by elimination Compared to the *Pancha bhutaas*, their causative principle viz. 'Cosmic consciousness (*Hiranyagarbha ahankāra*)' is true. This is step Two. In the same way gradually, Intellectual Principle (*mahat*) and the Unmanifested (*avyakta*) are eliminated. At the end, the unchanging, Pure Supreme Brahman will remain. This is called the "View of Elimination (*apavada driśti*)."

"Whichever viewpoint is adopted, what is obtained finally is one. And that is the Supreme Brahman. That pervades everything. That is Perfect (*paripurna*). That is Real. Rama! Leave sorrow, fear and duality and learn to live in a state of perfection."

Rama: "Master! You gave an uncontestable answer to my question about how we see the world. Nevertheless, my present state is like that of *dāma, vyāla and kata*. Is there a way for us to be rid of the misery from the binding world?

25. CONTINUATION OF Dāma, Vyāla and Kata STORY

Vasishta: "I was myself planning to address this issue. I left out a part of the story of *dāma, vyāla and kata* for this reason. I shall narrate that part now.

"When *dāma, vyāla and kata* were going through the tortures in Hell because of the anger of Yamadharma Raja, their fathers-in-law were sorry for them and pitied their plight. They approached Yamadharma Raja at an opportune moment and appealed to him to show a way out for their sons-in-law. Yamadharma Raja thought over it a bit and said, "When the three hear their complete life story, they will attain liberation." The fathers-in- law were happy to note that and returned to their city.

Rama: "Oh, Great Sage! You said that *dāma, vyāla and kata* are now living as little fish in a cesspool after going through thousands of births. Who could possibly narrate their full story to those fish? What can the fish understand even if they hear?"

Vasishta: "Rama, do not think that the series of their births is already concluded. In their next birth, they are going to be born as Swans. They will get, as Swans, an ability to think with discrimination. After that, they will be born in a town called Adhistana. There will be a small mountain named "Pradyumna" nearby. There will be a small cottage on the hill Pradyumna. There will be a small nest on the northeast wall of that house. *vyāla* will be born as a parrot in that nest. *dāma* will be born as a mosquito in a crack in a pillar of the same house. *Kata* will be born as a mynah somewhere and by God's grace will find his way into a cage in the same cottage. Narasimha, a minister in the court of King Yasaskara lives in that cottage. Narasimha possesses Divine knowledge and is a knower of truth. One day he will notice the mynah in the cage and know about its history. He will sing the history as a song. He makes it clear through the song that *dāma, vyāla and kata* were illusory beings, their life was an illusion, the entire series of births was nothing more than a fiction and that their true nature is untainted non-dualistic Consciousness.

"*Kata* listening to this song everyday will recall his total life story and muse over it. Immersed in such meditative thoughts, he will be filled with Supreme Consciousness and attain salvation. As everybody in the house starts singing that song, the parrot in the nest and the mosquito in the crack in the pillar too will listen to it, recollect their own life story and achieve salvation.

"Therefore, Rama, association with a noble person like that minister and introspection and self-analysis in the form of ruminating their life stories, will lead the three of them towards liberation. Good efforts made in this direction by anybody will never be a waste. A number of pieces of evidence are available for this.

"Out of all the good efforts, effort for understanding the self is far superior. The first step for this is renunciation (*vairagya*). Renunciation means an ability to identify the evil in the objects of pleasure. It feels miserable if one has to leave the very things one had been enjoying thus far. Unless one accepts this misery, one cannot learn to renounce. After renunciation comes into hold, it will not be difficult to drop even enjoyable things. One has to put up with a little difficulty in the beginning. To obtain this fortitude, one has to control his mind (*sama*).

"Mind is amenable to control. So it cannot be the Supreme Brahman. Looked at from this angle, both control and its opposite, not controlling, belongs to the visible world. Thus they are equivalent. Supreme Happiness expresses itself through control of mind only. Association with noble people is the principal means for the control of mind to take root and grow. Egoism is the antagonist that throws living beings into bondage (*samsara*). Those who could conquer egoism are truly noble persons."

26. THE THREE EGOISMS

Rama: "Great Sage! How does one conquer egoism?"

Vasishta: "It is by contemplation of the Self."

Rama: "Great Sage! I heard that egoism is of two types. If the egoism is based on the feeling 'the physical body is me', then it is called '*Sasarira ahamkara* (egoism associated with the body)' and if it is based on the feeling 'intellect is me', it is '*Asarira ahamkara* (egoism without body).' Is it enough if one of these egoisms goes or both have to go ? Some say that the egoism during the wakeful state is '*Sasarira ahamkara'*, and the one in dreams, daydreams and desires is '*Asarira ahamkara*.' What is your take on this?"

Vasishta: "Rama! None of these classifications are of any use for our discussion.

त्रिविधो राघवास्तीह त्वहंकारो जगत्त्रये ।

trividho rāghavāstīha tvahaṃkāro jagattraye |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 33, Sloka 49

"For our purpose, there are three types of egoisms. We shall take up in descending order. The first two are good. The third is the undesirable one and should be gotten rid of.

अहं सर्वमिदं विश्वं परमात्माहमच्युतः ।
नान्यदस्तीति परमा विज्ञेया सा ह्यहंकृतिः ।।

trividho rāghavāstīha tvahaṃkāro jagattraye |
dvau śreṣṭhāvitarastyājyaḥ śrṛṇu tvaṃ kathayāmi te ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 33, Sloka 50

"This entire visible world is me, the endless Supreme Consciousness is me, there is nothing different from me – such thoughts are also a type of *ahamkara*, egoism. But this is a superior type. It is there in liberated persons. If this feeling is present, one has achieved salvation. None advises to get rid of this type of egoism.

There is another egoism, contrary to this.

सर्वस्माद्व्यतिरिक्तोऽहं लाग्रशतकल्पितः
इति या संविदेषासौ द्वितीयाहंकृतिः शुभा ।

sarvasmādvyatirikto'haṃ lāgraśatakalpitaḥ
iti yā saṃvideṣāsau dvitīyāhaṃkṛtiḥ śubhā |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 33, Sloka 52

"To think that 'I am not any of these visible objects. Nothing touches me. I am subtler than the subtlest. More minute than minutiae' is the second type of egoism. This is also a good one. This will also lead to liberation. Some *jīvanmuktas* (persons liberated in this very life) think on these lines. It is not necessary to rid oneself of this egoism."

Rama: "In that case, can you refer to those two contemplations as egoism?"

Vasishta: "A good question. These two egoisms are the usual experiences of those who follow the "Seven Step Knowledge (*Saptajnanabhumika*)." In fact, considering from the point of view of those in the seventh step, Egoism is not a 'real' (*satya*) thing. But for those in the sixth sage, the body is still there. That is to say that they are still alive. Unless they have some type of ego bonding, it is not possible to have life-principle in them.
Hence their experience is referred to as egoism. This is just for name's sake. Please notice that there is no difference in the paths of the one who says that 'everything is me' and the one who says that 'nothing is me.' They are expressing the same experience in different words. That's all."

Rama: "You clarified very well, Great Sage! Please explain now the third egoism."

Vasishta: "This is worldly egoism. It teaches, "The body is me." You may call it '*Sasarira ahamkara'* or '*Asarira ahamkara'*. Irrespective of the name, the egoism that causes a feeling of identity of the body and 'me' is the worst enemy of mankind. Because of this, Daama, Vyaala and Kata fell from a high state to a mean base level!"

Rama: "What is the way to get rid of the third type of egoism?"

Vasishta: "Understand the first two types of egoism well and achieve one of them. That is the best way. This is the acceptable path for true seekers."

Rama: "Teacher! What does one who lost worldly egoism look like ? What are its effects?"

Vasishta: "He will be like the one in the Sixth Stage of Liberation. Is there any need to talk about the effect ? Union with the Supreme Consciousness is the effect."

नाहं न तेन मम किंचिदपीति मत्वा
सर्वं च मे सकलमप्यहमेव चेति ।
लब्धास्पदं मनसि संविदमेवमीड्यां
नीत्वा स्थितिं परमुपैति पदं महात्मा ।।

nāhaṃ na tena mama kiṃcidapīti matvā
sarvaṃ ca me sakalamapyahameva ceti |
labdhāspadaṃ manasi saṃvidamevamīḍyāṃ
nītvā sthitiṃ paramupaiti padaṃ mahātmā ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 33, Sloka 71

"One should contemplate that, "I am not this phenomenal world. I am not this body at all. There is no use of any of these for me." Later, he should feel that the whole world belongs to him and all are his own people. As one meditates on these terms, a spark of wisdom will strike in his mind. That wisdom should be firmed up. The noble person who can do that will reach Brahman. "Rama! This is the method. Proceed on this path.

27. bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida

Vasishta: "Coming back to our story of *dāma, vyāla and kata*, I have to add a few things. You will understand my idea if you listen to this also. While running after *dāma, vyāla and kata*, we forgot about Sambarasura, the hero of the story. Not only us; even the gods of that time did the same mistake. It turned out to be a blessing for Sambara.

"Sambarasura lost his army, his kingdom was broken, and he was dethroned. Initially he boiled with rage. He cooled down later and analyzed the reason for his defeat. He figured out the mistakes of *dāma, vyāla and kata*. He became revengeful. He thought of a scheme. His planning was, "I shall again create three more Demons. They will also be born of wizardry. I shall add a bit of knowledge about truth and discretion to them so that they will not get perverted in their thinking. They will not seethe with anger but will respond as per the demands of the situation. The war culture that goes into their lives through me will enable them to battle it out as per the needs of time. Even if the gods try to lure them, they will not succumb to them as they have discretionary knowledge. That way the gods will be ruined."

मायया उत्पादयामास बुद्बुदानिव वारिधिः ।।

māyayotpādayāmāsa budbudāniva vāridhiḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 7

"He used his magic to create three more Demons like bubbles in a sea. Please remember the simile. You will know its significance later.

Sambarasura named the three as *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida*. *bhīma* means Shiva. *bhāsa* means light. *dhrida* means stable forever. As planned by Sambarasura, all three of them were imparted well with truth and were valor.

"As expected the war between gods and the demons erupted. Gods were shocked at first. They composed themselves and started applying the trick taught by Brahma. New desires used to spring in *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida.* But the discretion within them made them think. They questioned themselves as follows:

"I want this, this is mine; he is my enemy; I do not want him. What is this "this"? Who is that "me"?" They used to contemplate on those lines. In that contemplative analysis, they could see that no object was "true". Their desires, fears etc then disappeared. They used to realize afresh each time that only the Supreme Consciousness was the truth.

Meanwhile the gods used to invade them. *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* never hesitated about action. They never thought about failure or success; they did not have loyalty to Sambarasura or hatred towards gods. They let things take their own course. They just used to react to the situations befittingly. This is, after all, "Attitude of Timely Action (*Praptakalatvam*)." *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* waged the war with the simple feeling that because they were born to fight on behalf of the demons, it was their duty to fight on their side. The gods couldn't face them. They had to run for their lives. The gods regrouped secretly at a place and analyzed the issue. They understood that it was their mistake to have hurried in throwing out *dāma, vyāla and kata* much before the hundred thousand years that Brahma indicated. They felt it awkward to go back to Brahma again for advice. They sought refuge now in Vishnu.

"Vishnu cajoled them. He told them, "There is no use killing the illusory demons. The causal force, the first *māya*, is Sambarasura. You cannot solve your problem unless you kill him. But that is beyond you. I shall accomplish it for your sake. Take shelter in my city till then." Thus speaking, he readied himself for a fight with Sambarasua.

"*bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* stood solidly behind Sambarasura in the ensuing war. But their strength was nothing before that of Vishnu. They were like little moths. Sambara, along with his followers, was flattened in the war. By that we mean they were leveled down. Rama, please remember the words "flattened and leveled."

"A lamp can glow only in air; but is also blown out by air. Similarly Vishnu extinguished *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida*. They did not have any residual impressions to be carried forward to. So just like the light of a blown out lamp, they too did not have any destination to go to. Nor did they have to go to any other world. They had not to take another birth. They had been in all-pervading Brahman state before losing the body. And they were in the same state even after the body was lost. Rama, the death of *jīvanmuktās, i.e.* persons who do not have any residual impressions of actions to be carried forward, will be like that. Please understand from this:

तस्माद्वासनया बद्धं मुक्तं निर्वासनं मनः ।

tasmādvāsanayā baddhaṃ muktaṃ nirvāsanaṃ manaḥ |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 27

"If impressions are carried, the mind is bound. If impressions are lost, the mind is freed." "For the lamp of mind, impressions are truly the fuel. Unpretentious and true contemplation evaporates the fuel. When all the memories go away, the lamp of mind is snuffed out. The true contemplation is to realize that there is not even a grain of truth in the entire visible world. To recognize that there is hardly any need to cogitate is called *samīcīna bhāvana* (Proper meditation). This is also referred to as *samyagīkśana* (Proper vision).

"Rama! Though possessed of powers of wizardry and discretion, Sambarasura lacked proper vision. Therefore, he could not get the *sarvatma bhāva,* a feeling that all things are nothing but Self. Because he died at the hands of Vishnu himself, he obtained eligibility to go straight to the abode of Vishnu. You are already aware of the supremacy of Vishnu.

"Rama, if a child is under an illusion that he has seen a ghost, we have to help him to slowly get out of the thought of a ghost. We have to encourage him to develop discretion. In a similar way, if the mind is overtaken by the impressions of memories and ego, we have to eliminate these by learning about the life history of the Daama trio. The nature of true Consciousness has to be inculcated through the stories of *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida*.

"Because of their egos, *dāma, vyāla and kata* went to hell; being egoless, *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* got liberation, though they took part in many activities. We have to continuously keep teaching this to our mind."

Thus spoke Vasishta as the closing lines of this story. Before taking up his next discourse, it behoves us to give a break here and review the salient issues.

28. REVISITING THE STORY

The name of the story is *dāma, vyāla kata Upakhyana*. *dāma* means thread; *vyāla* is snake and *kata* is a mat. Two examples are famously used in Vedanta to illustrate illusion. The major illusion is to see a snake instead of a rope. It is called "Illusory Snake in a Rope (*Rajju Sarpa Bhraanti*)." Substituting the words *dāma, vyāla* in the above, it can be called *dāma, vyāla bhrānti*.

If the threads (*dāma*) in the rope are woven in a warp and weft, it will be a cloth or a mat (*kata*). Let us examine what is cloth. Suppose as part of examining we strip it into threads. Then what happens? There is no more cloth any more. Nor are there the warp and weft. There are only shreds of the thread. If the shreds are together, it is a thread. If the threads are rolled together, we call it a ball.

If they are woven in warp and weft, we call it a cloth. Therefore, cloth is not a true thing appearing from somewhere. It is an illusion like the snake in the rope. This is "Illusory Mat in Thread (*dāma kata bhrānti*)."

The entire visible world is full of these two types of illusory substances. In order to convey the essential truth (*tatva*) of the phenomenal world, Vasistha adapted the three Imaginary creatures – *dāma, vyāla and kata.*

In the illusions stated above, we treated the thread (*dāma*) as if it is true. How did the thread come about? A metaphor will suggest an answer. Water, waves, bubbles and lather are a good example. In the normal view, water, bubbles, waves etc are all different from one another. Each has its own form. But if one thinks deeply, lather is bubbles, bubbles are waves, and waves are water. So the basic source for all is water. Another word for water in Sanskrit is *Sambara*. Sage Vasishta gave this name to the hero of the story.
Indicating his method of nomenclature, he even said at one place,

माययोत्पादयामास बुद्बुदानिव वारिधिः

māyayotpādayāmāsa budbudāniva vāridhiḥ

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 7

(just as the sea creates bubbles, Sambara created Bhima and others.)

Again, he expressed the same idea in the following Sloka too.

दामव्यालकटाकारैश्चेतः परिणतं यथा

dāmavyālakaṭākāraiścetaḥ pariṇataṃ yathā

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 34, Sloka 34

(Just as the mind changes into rope, snake or mat, the Supreme Self modifies itself into visible objects).

The above statement also makes it clear about the naming of characters adopted by Vasishta. Whereas there are many words for water in Sanskrit, Vasishta selected "*Sambara*" for another reason too. The word is derived from: "**शं व्रणोति आवरणोतिति शम्बरा** " *śaṃ vraṇoti āvaraṇotiti śambarā* "

'*Sam*' means peace. Sambara is one who envelops *sam* – peace. But it is in fact *māya* (illusion) that envelops peace as per Vedantic concepts. That's why, Sambara was shown to be a wizard of magic (illusion).

If Sambara (the enveloping cover) is removed, what is left will be *sam* – peace. To indicate this, the author poet used the word 'flattened and leveled' (*sasāma*) in the episode on the destruction of Sambarasura.

Knowledge about the sense objects and knowledge about Truth - both are part of *māya* (illusion). Concepts of bondage and liberation exist only in nescience. That is why, Sambarasura could create not only *dāma, vyāla and kata* but also *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida*.

bhīma means Shiva. The author poet used this word to show an object of Truth. *bhāsa* means luminous. This word is used in the sense of wisdom (*jnana*). *dhrida* means ever lasting. This word is used to indicate infinity.

If we summate these three, we arrive at the Vedic statement,

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyaṃ jñānamanantaṃ brahma*

ṭattariya ūpaniśad 1-2-1

This means that Brahman is Truth (Reality), Wisdom and Infinity. That is the reason that *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* never went anywhere after leaving their bodies. They remained where they were.

It is said in the Upanishads at several places that noble persons knowledgeable of Reality after achieving unity with the Supreme Consciousness do not have ascension beyond life (*pranotkramana*) and they attain the feeling that all things are nothing but Self (*sarvātma bhāva)*. Sage Vasishta allegorically described the same through this story.

The word *vishnu* here means "All pervading Supreme Self." Vishnu's war with Sambara signifies the fight between Supreme Reality and Illusion (*māya*). Though *māya* is dependent on the Supreme Self, it envelops Him. That is the nature of *māya*. Hence Sage Vasishta said in the Utpatti Prakarana (Yoga Vasishta - Book 2) that bondage was only for Eswara.

On whomsoever the grace of Eswara falls, those creatures will be free of *māya*. They become fully liberated. That is what happened to *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* .

What happens to Sambarasura who is a total *māya*? It does not go away fully. It subsides and stays as dissolution (*pralaya*). The author poet showed, therefore, that Sambara was flattened and leveled. When the new Period (*kalpa*) starts, Maya will rise again. This cycle is beginningless.

In this allegory, gods mean "the powers of senses (*indriya sakti*)." Brahma is the quality of Movement (*rajo guna*) with a desire to create. The powers of senses (gods) could win for sometime with the backing of *rajoguna* but were later defeated. They realized their limitation, approached the *satva guna* personified in the form of Vishnu. Vishnu himself had to fight for the gods and achieve final success.

Further, Sage Vasishta was also teaching a way for salvation. The ordinary folk who move under the force of *rajo guna* have first to worship the God, who is an embodiment of Truth and Reality. Then, through self-introspection comprehend him to be the Supreme Self pervading all. This is the only way to get rid of the bondage and liberate our minds.

Every living being is born because of illusion (*māya*). The very first seed of his genealogy is illusion. But everybody forgets this and thinks that the story from the birth of his physical body to its death is his life-story. Instead of that, if he learns the story from the time the first seed of illusion is laid to the present, that will constitute the truly complete story of himself. One who is aware of this full story will appreciate that he got so many bodies because of illusion and his true nature is in fact Pure Consciousness.

That understanding is liberation. Sage Vasishta, through the incident of a boon granted by Yamadharma raja (the God of Death) in the story of the Daama trio, indicated the importance of knowing the full life-story for obtaining salvation. It may be recalled that while bestowing the boon, the God of Death declared, "When the three of your sons-in-law listen to the full story of their births, then they will be free of all difficulties."

To "be free of all difficulties" denotes liberation. "To listen to the full story of their births" signifies the preceding self-analysis *(ātma vicāra*). Sage Vasishta portrayed that a parrot, mynah and mosquito were liberated to connote that even the most wretched could attain salvation through self-analysis. It also suggests another thing that Sage Vasishta had in mind. If trivial living things like even mosquitoes can be liberated, it cannot be that only certain human sects can pull off enlightenment and not others.

Sage Vasishta said that a *mantri* (minister) narrated the life stories. A Mantri is one who has a *mantra*. That is to say, one who has good thinking. Or in other words, he is a Knower (*jnāni*). It points to a Guru, a good teacher. Some more details of such allegorical significance were pointed out during the narration. It will be of immense benefit to the reader to go through the story once again keeping the inner meaning in mind.

Vasishta: "Rama! You questioned how a 'stain' called mind originated from an Ultra Pure Self. I said at that time that it was premature to discuss it.

"We learnt what people of different faiths said on this issue. We analyzed their opinions and concluded that their views were mere illusions and only Vedas teach the right path. In that context we also said that the tool available for an ordinary person for obtaining liberation was the mind. We remarked that the mind had to be controlled vigilantly as otherwise one could fall from grace even after attaining a higher level. We said that a disciplined and groomed mind could lead straight to liberation. We narrated the *dāma, vyāla and kata Upakhyana* and *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida Upakhyana* as illustrations. We have now to make a study of the means of calming down the mind which is the cause for both bondage and deliverance."

With these words, Vasishta planned to continue his philosophical instruction with the story of "*dāsūra vara pradana*." In preparation for this, he gave a detailed theoretical exposition from 35th to 46th Sargas - a length of 12 Sargas. It was a rigorous discussion full of jargon and occasionally repetitious. Culling out parts of it contextually, we shall briefly present the substantial points here. Vasishta started the dialogue.

Vasishta: "Rama**,** I already said that it was essential that the mind should be calmed to be rid of bondage and to be liberated. You may ask how the mind is connected to the issue of bondage and liberation. The essence of Wisdom (*jnāna*) lies in understanding that relation.

श्रूयतां ज्ञानसर्वस्वं श्रुत्वा चैवावधार्यताम् ।
भोगेच्छामात्रको बन्धस्तत्त्यागो मोक्ष उच्यते ।।

śrūyatāṃ jñānasarvasvaṃ śrutvā caivāvadhāryatām |
bhogecchāmātrako bandhastattyāgo mokṣa ucyate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 3

"Desire to experience pleasures is bondage. Dropping that desire is liberation."

"Desire and dropping of desire are both mind-related. How the mind is related to liberation or bondage is clear from this.

"Rama, we can express the same thing in another way.

सर्वगे स्वात्मनि स्वच्छे एषोऽहमिति भावना ।
एतत्तद्बन्धनं लोके स्वविकल्पोपकल्पितम् ।।

sarvage svātmani svacche eṣo'hamiti bhāvanā |
etattadbandhanaṃ loke svavikalpopakalpitam ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 39

"The Self forgets that it pervades everything and everywhere. It falsely imagines that 'I am within this body.' It identifies with the limited adjunct of the body though it is itself infinite. Such a thought of identification is delimiting, binding. Please observe that! The keyword for producing bondage as per this definition also is "thought". The opposite thought is liberation.

अनन्तोऽस्मीश्वरोऽस्मीति निश्चयेन विलीयते ।।

ananto'smīśvaro'smīti niścayena vilīyate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 38

"I am that infinity. I am the Lord of the Cosmos (Eswara)." This determination destroys the bondage produced by the imaginary delimiting fiction. That is to say, liberation is obtained.

"Even here, bondage and liberation are defined in relation to the mind."

Rama: "But what is mind, My Teacher?"

Vasishta:

दृश्यदृष्टिः स्फुटा येयं सा ह्यवश्यमसन्मयी ।
तन्मयत्वं च मनसः स्वरूपं विद्धि नेतरत् ।।

dṛśyadṛṣṭiḥ sphuṭā yeyaṃ sā hyavaśyamasanmayī |
tanmayatvaṃ ca manasaḥ svarūpaṃ viddhi netarat ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 47

We see a variety of objects all around us. Things we see are really there or do they appear to be there even without being there ? Can things be seen without being there ? Yes !

"Don't we see hills and valleys in a dream even if nothing is there? Will you say that the things that we see around are not like dream worlds because these things are stable and they exist for a long time?

"It is true that they are seen for a long time. But it is also equally true that they have a point of beginning and an end. That means, they had not been there prior to their beginning and they will not be after they are gone. Such things that were not in existence earlier and will not exist later, but appear in the intermittent time cannot be real. Hence, what are visible to us are apparitional objects (*driśya driśti*) but not true objects! The 'seeing' (*driśti*) in the form of visibles (*driśyas*) is unreal (*asanmaya*) – that is to say it shows non- existing things as existing!

"The strange thing is that the seer identifies himself (*tanmaya*) with the unreal objects seen because of the unreal nature of 'seeing'. This identification of the seer with the unreal objects is the true form of mind!

"That gives us the definition of mind.

The impressions (*vasanās*) of unreal objects being seen get consolidated over several births.

"What comes out of all this is: The consolidated impressions of past births of an individual (*Jiva*) is called mind.

"When you are awake, you have had some experiences. When some of them are consolidated, you get a dream. You become a king in that dream. The king has a mind. Strictly speaking, that mind is the king! Where did the dream mind come from ? The solidified impressions of the wakeful state have become the mind of the king. In the same way, the impressions gathered and solidified in the past births form your present mind. Hence, Rama, please understand that your impressions are your mind!

"Earlier, we gave two definitions for bondage. The gist of those definitions is that to pile up impressions is bondage. To terminate them is liberation! The mind is like a seed. If you sow a specific seed, you get a particular tree. But you pre-treat the seed in some way, the tree that comes out of it will not be like the usual tree.

अम्लं मधुरसासिक्तं मधुरं मधुरञ्जितम् ।
बीजं प्रतिविषाकल्कसिक्तं च कटु जायते ।।

amlaṃ madhurasāsiktaṃ madhuraṃ madhurañjitam |
bījaṃ prativiṣākalkasiktaṃ ca kaṭu jāyate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 29

"If you sow a tamarind seed after pre-treating it with some prescribed procedures like soaking in sugarcane juice etc., the tree that comes out of it would look like a normal tamarind tree; but its fruits will be sweet and not sour. The same tamarind seed, if treated in a different way, could give rise to a tamarind tree whose fruits could be bitter.

Rama, you read about these details in your Botany texts. The mind is also like the tamarind tree. If you soak it well in the juices of good thoughts, it will become noble and lead to salvation."

[Readers may note that a scientific point is made out here. Some seed manipulative techniques akin to genetic modification have been mentioned in the example. As this is not a text on Botany, further details were not discussed in Yogavaasishta. It is clear from this, however, that such plant modification techniques were known to the people of those days.]

Sage Vasishta continues:

Vasishta: "Therefore, Rama, Practice noble thoughts. "I am limited and subjected to change." This is a wrong feeling that takes shape without effort in everybody. Counter it with another set of thoughts. Think "I am infinite. I am the Lord of Cosmos."
With such thoughts, gradually the mind itself will get annihilated.

मनसोऽभ्युदयो नाशो मनोनाशो महोदयः ।
ज्ञमनो नाशमभ्येति मनोऽज्ञस्य विवर्धते ।।

manaso'bhyudayo nāśo manonāśo mahodayaḥ |
jñamano nāśamabhyeti mano'jñasya vivardhate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 35, Sloka 18

"Rama! The mind is a strange thing. An expansive mind is one that is extinguished. When the mind is wiped out, it has really expanded!

"A truly knowledgeable person's mind is eliminated. Only an unknowing (ignorant) person's mind balloons up !!

Rama: "Teacher! You speak strangely indeed! They are mutually contradictory statements. You have some inner meaning to convey and are talking in riddles. Will you please clarify?

Vasishta: "Rama! There is no big secret here. We already said that the mind was nothing but the consolidated impressions. Impressions are thoughts and counter thoughts. When impressions exist, the mind becomes restless. Restlessness is destruction. (Destruction here means absence of the original expansive state of Consciousness). If such a mind grows, agitation increases. A ballooned up mind is a spoiled mind.

"Eradication of mind means suppression of thoughts and counter thoughts. If those are flattened, what is there in mind? The mind itself is not there! In the absence of thoughts and counter thoughts, there will be unlimited peace. Peace is real improvement. Hence annihilation of mind is actually an improvement ! To emphasize this point, I said that a knowledgeable person (*jnāni*) would not have a mind. His mind is destroyed; an ignorant person will have a bloated mind. You will not find my words contradictory if you understand them from this perspective. Therefore, Rama, try to eliminate thoughts and counter thoughts."

29. NONEXISTING WORLD GETS EXISTENCE

Rama: "Teacher! You said that the objects seen were unreal and absolutely non-existent. It means that the entire visible world is not there at all. But the Supreme Self is truly existent. How could the non-existent world get sustenance in the ever-existent Supreme Self ? You talked about it earlier. But in the light of what you have said now, new doubts are coming up. Please expand on this."

Vasishta: "Rama, The Supreme Self is Consciousness. Consciousness is of two types. The Consciousness is luminescent in persons of Knowledge (*jnāni*)**.** It projects the wheel of births and deaths (*samsāra*) in the ignoramus."

Rama: "What is the Supreme Self and what is *samsāra* – the wheel of births and deaths?"

Vasishta: "This whole wide world is seen by both the Knowledgeable and the ignorant ones. Both the grandfather and his grandson see the waves, bubbles and lather. The grandfather knows that all those waves, bubbles, lather are nothing but water. The grandson thinks that they are all different. In the same way, a knowledgeable person sees in everything visible, the same Consciousness that is all pervading and continuously existing. This is the perspective of the grandfather. Experiencing this is nothing but the Supreme Consciousness being luminescent. Experiencing the visible things as diverse and existing is like the perspective of the young lad. That experience is the *samsāra.*

"The summary is that which is the Supreme Consciousness to the Knowledgeable ones, is the creator in the eyes of the ignorant ones. The 'doership' (*kartrutva*) of the creator is unlike that of, say, the potter. Here the Supreme Consciousness itself becomes the very things that come out of it – the five elements like the earth, physical objects etc. The potter does not himself become the pot. But the Supreme Consciousness manifests itself as the universe. That is the difference between the doership of a potter and that of the creator.

" But then, can one call the transformation of the Supreme Consciousness as authorship or doership? That is up to you. It depends on the viewpoint. Because it is a change and because the author of that change is the supreme Consciousness, do you like to describe it as the author? You may; but note that this authorship is different from that of the potter!

"A subject, (i.e. a doer, an author) needs a tool; a material cause; an intention; an action and many more. Then only he can be an author (*karta*). The Supreme Consciousness does not have any of these adjuncts. Hence, it cannot be an author. Therefore, 'doership' cannot be attributed to it. If you argue on these lines, okay, it is not the creator.

"These are two perspectives. Two different points of view. Yet, these have a commonality too. The Absolute Intelligent Self (**चिदात्मा** *cidātmā*), being a non-doer, exists immanently in all objects, propels them to do their respective functions, being itself untouched (unaffected) and remaining resplendent.

"Let us take an example. A seed is sown in the soil. चिदात्मा *cidātmā* is in it. Because of *cidātma*, the shoots try to come out. The seed is surrounded by soil. But there is space (*akasa*) in-between soil-grains. The porous space around the soil particles gives an opportunity to the shoot to come up. Space is that which gives an opportunity for objects to exist. What this implies is, the चिदात्मा *cidātmā*, permeating the space is helping the shoot to come out.

Next is air. By air, we mean, the life-giving wind useful for the respiration of the plant. The चिदात्मा *cidātmā* permeating the air resonates and pulls up the shoot. Similar is the case with water. Even though it is inert, the चिदात्मा *cidātmā* in water moistens the seed and softens it. The चिदात्मा *cidātmā* permeating the earth gives its strength to the roots and supports it.

Next is the fire. Fire enters the plant through the sunrays. The चिदात्मा *cidātmā* permeating fire gives a form to the plant. From the form, it gets its unique identity.

"In this way, each of the five elements (*pancha bhutās*) helps every action in the world in its own way. "Time" too adds its contribution. The all-pervading immanent Self (*antaryāmi*) in the form of Time is much stronger. He engulfs the creations that take place for eons and eons.

"Rama, what comes out of all this is: The all pervading चिदात्मा *cidātmā* is assuming all forms. So the unreal but visible objects are within चिदात्मा *cidātmā*. Who is viewing? *Cidātma* himself is viewing. How is this possible? For a highly inebriated person, he himself appears as another. चिदात्मा *cidātmā* covered by māya (illusion) appears as inert for himself. So I have named it as "The Creationist View (*srishti drishti*)" or "Object View (*driśya driśti*)."Expressing it in the usual Vedantic jargon, the entire visible world is the "Illusory Appearance" (*vivarta*) of चिदात्मा *cidātmā* "Illusory Appearance" is like seeing a snake in a rope - seeing the world in चिदात्मा *cidātmā.*

"To sum up, there is nothing different from Self in the entire world. When there is nothing different from you, there is no question of desiring something. How can you then create something or how can you get something as an effect? Therefore, Rama, whatever you do, leave out the feeling of authorship and perform the deed. You will then attract no sorrow."

30. WHAT IS DOERSHIP ?

Rama: "Master, I asked how the non-existent world could come to exist in the चिदात्मा *cidātmā* who transcends the world. Undoubtedly this was an old question. Your answer was also on the same old lines. But guessing the reason for my question, you molded your reply in a befitting manner. As an extension of it, you tell me to develop "Non-doership." Is it possible to be a non-doer? On the top of it, when even highly learned persons take certain ritualistic actions, does it not mean that they have doership for their actions? Why should I abandon authorship when they are not abandoning?"

Vasishta: "Rama, what do you understand by authorship ? Suppose a person moved in his sleep. Unknown to him, the clay on the ground molds into some shape. Now is he the author of that shape? If you say so, he must be able to make similar shapes again and again. He cannot do it. Therefore, you will not get authorship by mere action of the body.

"You get authorship when a work is done intentionally desiring a specific result. Thus authorship is dependent on three things: (i) awareness; (ii) desire; and (iii) effort. Awareness means awareness of the outcome of an action. Desire is the wish to acquire that result. Effort is to act with the sensory and action organs. Work is done when those three conditions are fulfilled. Even if the three conditions exist silently in the mind, it is as good as doing a deed, though no obvious external action has taken place. Then the person gets doership.

"An act even if done openly but without the three steps will not attract authorship to the doer. This is the case with *jnānis* (knowledgeable persons). Whether it is a worldly action or yogic action, they will not have the awareness or desire to do it. Mere movement of organs takes place based on the strength of the past practices. Hence they do not get any doership linked to it.

"The ignorant ones, though visibly not moving their organs, keep thinking in their mind about the outcomes. They intend to achieve the outcomes. They keep scheming actions within their mind. Hence doership will stick to such persons. And whoever has doership has to necessarily reap the consequences.

"Hence, Rama, wiping out awareness and desires from mind amounts to "non-doership." And that is quite possible. Those knowledgeable of Truth achieved this. You should also get it!"

[**Note:** All of this is in the 38th Sarga. Sage Valmiki went into prose mode here with a detailed philosophical presentation on the subject. He wrote:

मनो यत्करोति तत्कृतं भवति यन्न करोति तन्न कृतं भवति अतो मन एव कर्तृ न देहः ।।

mano yatkaroti tatkṛitaṃ bhavati yanna karoti
tanna kṛitaṃ bhavati ato mana eva kartṛi na dehaḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 38, Sloka 7

Let us continue with Sage Vasishta.]

31. CAUSES OF DISTRESS

Vasishta: "Rama, by the way, I know why you asked me this question! You want to say that non-doership is impossible even for the Supreme Self. Let us keep it aside for a while. Let me ask you a question. There are some things in this world that we can accept (receive) and some we have to discard. Is that not correct? Please tell me which of those causes misery?"

Rama: "There is no question of getting sorrow from things which have to be given up.

Which are the things to be given up ? If a thing was with us and caused misery for us, then obviously, it has to be thrown out. Once we know that it is a thing to be avoided, we will not touch it. It can then produce no misery for us."

"A thing is acceptable in our view until we know that it should be avoided. So I feel that there are two types of acceptable things.

1. Those that are truly acceptable, and
2. Those we accept because we did not know that they have to be avoided.

We may get grief out of the first group. There is no scope for grief from the second group."

Vasishta: "No, that wouldn't work! I shall explain why. Are the two types of things permanent or perishable? Let us analyze from both angles.

"Suppose they are impermanent. Things that cannot save themselves cannot bring permanent distress to others. Therefore, those of the acceptable things that are impermanent cannot cause sorrow!

"If the acceptable thing is permanent, Vedas say, "*atonyadartam*." It means anything other than Self is perishable. Hence, it cannot be possible that imperishable things would exist amongst acceptable ones. So there are no two types of acceptable things, as you contended. Only perishables exist and they cannot cause unhappiness.

"So, those which have to be discarded or those which can be accepted cannot cause any sadness. In other words, there is nothing that can cause melancholy in the world.

"If Self does not have grief, we need not specially say that it does not have "doership." Hence it will not have to suffer the consequences also. If it appears like an author, we have to deduce that it is so because the ignorant ones are attributing the doership to Self.

"Knowers of truth too cannot escape the 'attributed doership'. That does not affect the state of truthfulness of the knower.

"Hence Rama, do not think that non-doership is impossible to the Supreme Self. It is 'attributed doership' that you see in the knowers and also in the Supreme Self."

Rama: "Gurudeva! Willy-nilly what you are saying is that the Supreme Self is perfect, is permeating everywhere; and bondage and freedom are no more than the constructs of an ignorant mind. If what you said is true – if bondage and freedom are non-existent things – where could this creation in nothingness appear? How could it come about? What for? Where there is no wall, can a wall-painting be there?"

Vasishta thought over this question a bit. After all, the same questions are being repeated. He mused within himself. "Is it because Rama is not able to catch up with the subject matter of 'Attributeless Brahman' (*Nirguna Brahman*) that I am talking about ? Or is it because he did not like my argument? Is he indecisive and not clear? Whatever it is, unless I know his state, I should not respond to him straight away." Thinking thus, he finally spoke as follows.

Vasishta: "Rama! The Supreme Self is omnipotent. He can take any shape he wants to. One of his infinite powers is that mutually contradictory principles can coexist at the same time and at the same place supported by him. Existence - non-existence; Oneness - multiplicity; Beginning - end and similar opposites stay in him without conflict. From that strange power this world comes into existence. In front of his unimaginable potential, questions like 'how could there be a painting without a canvass' are irrelevant."

Rama: "Master! You are proceeding in your reply from a perspective of modification – that the Supreme Brahman gets modified. In this method, the quality of the causal substance inheres in the modified form. Fire will have heat and not coldness. Ice will have coldness and not heat. The contrary position is impossible.

"In the same way, in the Supreme Self who transcends senses cannot have perishability. The substances that are perceptible to the senses cannot have permanency. In the process of modification, the qualities of the cause will inherit in the effect; just like the quality of clay being present in the pot. If the world comes into existence out of a modification of the Ultra Pure *cidātma*, the permanency character of *cidātma*has to be inherited by the world. The 'changelessness' of चिदात्मा *cidātmā* should be present in the world. But we do not see that!

"Hence we cannot say that the world has come about from a modification of the Supreme Self. In that case, one has to postulate that the Supreme Self and the World are different. That will be equivalent to saying that there is an inert matter disparate from the Supreme Self. To say that is an affront on the Supreme Self! Therefore, your reply is not acceptable."

Vasishta: "Rama, you put it well! I just wanted to assess your understanding and hence I took recourse to the "Theory of Modification" (*parināma vāda*). You could catch the weak points in it. Now I shall come to the actual position. Please follow this carefully. There are no two entities called the world and Brahman. Both are one only. It is not that fire is different from heat. Similarly, it is not that the world is distinct from the Supreme Self!"

Rama: "This does not clarify a thing. Neither sorrow nor the pairs of opposites exist in the Supreme Brahman that you speak of. But this world has both of these. How can then the world and Brahman be one?"

Vasishta: "Rama! You have to resolve it by yourself through your experience! A reply to this question according to the scriptural tradition, has to be provided towards the end, at the time of summing up the final conclusion and not now. For the present, think of the Supreme Brahman as a great Magician! A magician can change a mouse into a mountain or a mountain into a mouse. The Supreme Brahman can do anything like that!!

"Isn't the ocean producing waves? A particular phase of the ocean water is called a wave. A particular phase of the Supreme Brahman is the world. There is neither any creator nor any enjoyer of the transformation of the world."

32. ORIGINATION OF INDIVIDUALS

Rama: "Teacher! You are suggesting that I should view the creation from the perspective of a Brahman with Attributes (*saguna brahman*). In that case, how many individuals have originated from him? How do they originate? When do they originate?"

Vasishta: "What I am going to do is to establish that the world and all the creatures in it are in their essential nature (*swarūpa*) nothing but the Supreme Brahman, himself. It is not to say that Brahman and the world are different. Please keep this in mind while listening to the creation of the individual beings.

"First there was the Power of Pure Consciousness. An intention (*sankalpa*) to create arose in that Power of Consciousness. The reason for this thought is the residual impressions of actions of the earlier Kalpa (Kalpa refers to a cycle of 4.32 billion years). These impressions could be many, variegated and very startling. Therefore, it is difficult to state decisively how and when this 'thought to create' arises. Elders state that it happens randomly (without expectation, "*yadruchaya*"). The Pure Consciousness associated with the intention of creation is called *jīva*. "When the intention condenses, it gives rise to a vibration referred to as a manifestation of "I" in *jīva*. This is called "Throb of Self or I-consciousness." It gets further dense to become mind. The mind serves as a container to help *jīva* to manifest himself.

"The mind in association with the *jīva*, fantasizes this whole world in no time, like building castles in the air. In this fantasy, the mind pretends to have lost first its state of Pure Consciousness and then its state of being the seer (*drigrūpa*).

"The *Jiva* in that state does not comprehend his own Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness appears as a "vacuum" to him. He calls it space (*akaśa)*.

"The *jīva* experiences, under his power of intention, a creation as if a creator, a four-faced Brahma, is creating it. Then the fourteen worlds (*lokas*) come up. Where did all these come from ? Please observe. They have originated from the intention of the *jīva* i.e. the mind of *jīva* !

Now, we shall consider the individual beings. We shall classify them into three groups for our discussion, viz. 1. Totally Deluded; 2. Discerning by Birth; and 3. Lacking Detachment.

"The Totally Deluded persons are one hundred percent ignoramus. The second group, The Discerning by Birth, as the name implies, are perfectly wise and knowledgeable right from birth. The third group comprises those who, though trying for liberation, are undecided and vacillating. The first two types are not concerned with Truth, knowledge or spiritual practices.

The first group, the Totally deluded, is nowhere near Truth, knowledge or spiritual practices. The group of people who are Discerning by Birth have both knowledge and an understanding of truth. Therefore truth, knowledge or spiritual practices are of no use for this group, as their purpose was already served. All the teachings and methods of practices for salvation are for the undecided third group!

"In order to inculcate detachment into them, God introduced a series of sorrows and comforts. Under the impact of these, they go through varied forms of *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* pursuits. All this perturbation is like high turbulent waves in a fierce storm on high seas. And like the endless ocean, there is one seamless Beingness! If a part of it acquires 'individual selfhood' (*jīva bhāva*), the movement called creation begins. I shall describe this in detail later on."

33. PLAY OF WORDS

Rama: "Teacher! Just a second. On one hand you say that it is seamless and infinite. On other hand you say a part moves. How can you reconcile these two statements?"

Vasishta: "A good question Rama! To tell you the truth, these two can never be reconciled. Do not feel bad. The Vedas and scriptures speak in those terms. Even though it is known to be false, the scriptures continue to talk and write like that.

"Some time back I compared the origin of the universe from the Supreme Self like that of a lamp from another lamp. Even this is a fabrication. Are there two entities there like two lamps? Is the Supreme Self a type of entity that can give birth to anything?

"In such a case, what is the purpose of using such words? When the disciple is at a lower level, this type of dialog is necessary to direct his attention towards Truth.

वाक्प्रपञ्चं विना त्वेतदज्ञानमतुलं तमः ।
भेत्तुमन्योन्यमुदितं यत्नं कर्तुं न शक्यते ।।

vākprapañcaṃ vinā tvetadajñānamatulaṃ tamaḥ |
bhettumanyonyamuditaṃ yatnaṃ kartuṃ na śakyate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 12

Ignorance comes in two forms. One is "Spiritual Path Related.". The other is "Primordial Ignorance" in the mind of the seeker. The pair strengthens and reinforces one another. One should make an attempt to cut them at the same time. That attempt cannot be done in the absence of such a play of words."

Rama: "Master! You admit that what you have been teaching is untrue. Any knowledge gained from falsehood would also be false and a part of nescience. One mendacity cannot be the opposite of another mendacity. How can then your teaching destroy nescience?"

Vasishta: "Some devoted wives follow their husbands into the funeral pyre. Don't they know that their bodies will be burnt by this? They know! Still they do it with the belief that it will help their souls. Even in nescience, there is some superior type. The superior type of ignorance enters into the mind of an individual as a result of his meritorious deeds of past lives. These are referred to as "the *sattvic* ignorance (the ignorance which is dominated by *sattva guna* – purity, goodness, softness and the like)." The '*sattvic* ignorance' has a strong motive to do good to the individual who is its master. It desires that pure knowledge should dawn on the individual. Who hinders wisdom from inhabiting him? Ignorance blocks wisdom! The '*sattvic* ignorance', like the devoted wives, purposefully invites on to itself pure knowledge that destroys it. The '*sattvic* ignorance' takes root and intensifies with my play of words."

Rama: "Teacher, you talk of nescience and illusion. What is an illusion (*māya)*?"

Vasishta:

अप्रेक्ष्यमाणा स्फुरति प्रेक्षिता सु विनश्यति ।

aprekṣyamāṇā sphurati prekṣitā su vinaśyati |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 17

"Rama, it will be visible, if you do not see; if you look at it, it will disappear! Illusion is strange indeed! The less we talk about it, the better it is.

कुतो जातेयमिति ते राम मास्तु विचारणा ।।
इमां कथमहं हन्मीत्येषा तेऽस्तु विचारणा ।

kuto jāteyamiti te rāma māstu vicāraṇā ||
imāṃ kathamahaṃ hanmītyeṣā te'stu vicāraṇā |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 32-33

"Rama! Do not worry about the questions of Wherefrom, Why and How about illusion. Think of the ways of getting rid of it !

अविद्याविततव्याधेरौषधं श्रृणु राघव ।।

avidyāvitatavyādherauṣadhaṃ śrṛṇu rāghava ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 42, Sloka 1

"I shall tell you the medicine for the disease of nescience. Please listen."

Sage Vasishta talked about various methods of getting rid of the disease of ignorance in the next six Sargas. They were mostly a recapitulation of what was already covered.

Nevertheless, he effected occasional changes to his presentation incorporating some fresh viewpoints and clarifications in the understanding of the state of the universe.

34. DESCENT OF jīva

Vasishta described the origination of *jīva* in the 42nd Sarga. The central point is expressed in the following sloka:

क्रमेण पाकवशतः फलमेति यथान्यताम् ।
अवस्थयैव नाकृत्या जीवो मलवशात्तथा ।।

krameṇa pākavaśataḥ phalameti yathānyatām |
avasthayaiva nākṛtyā jīvo malavaśāttathā ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 42, Sloka 27

There is a small fruit on the tree. Slowly it grew and ripened. It's not that something is lost and a new thing is born. Whatever was already there changed its state. It is a transition of phase. Still, people talk as if raw and ripened fruits are different. Similarly, the association of ignorance brings in a change of phase in the individual (*jīva*). The thing does not change, but the state changes. Nevertheless, the world refers to it as if the thing has changed.

There is only one Consciousness. Because of the force of impressions, it looks as though it developed an attachment (*abhimana*) as "me" on a base, i.e. a body. Then that Consciousness is called "knower of the field of the body" (*kshetrajna*). If the impressions condense further, the same Consciousness is known as "Ego or I-consciousness (*ahamkāra*)." More consolidation of ego in a decisional function – *nischayātmaka vritti*) is referred to as Intellect (*buddhi*). When 'thought and counter thought (*sankalpa vikalpa*) enter it, it becomes Mind (*manas*). When the thoughts firm up, it becomes senses. Further solidification makes it the physical body. All of this is akin to the raw fruit changing into a ripened one. A phase change – that is what Sage Vasishta established in this Sarga.

Determining thus, Vasishta could put forward that the modifications of life take place because of the force of impressions. The 43rd Sarga discusses the way of action (*karmagati*) and the consequential births of the *jīvas*. Vasishta maintained that all the individuals (*jīvas*) at the end (i.e. at the time of dissolution – *pralaya*) merge into Nature (*prakriti*) that exists like a seed. The 44th Sarga starts with a question on this concept. The question was if all the individuals merged with Nature at the time of dissolution, how creation could begin again as all the *jīvas* got liberated at that time. Vasishta was a bit annoyed at this question. He chided Rama saying that he answered this long back and asked Rama, "Can't you infer even if I had not told you? **शेमुषी क्व गता तव** *Semushi kva gataa tava?* – what happened to your intelligence?. However, he once again narrated the origination of the universe in his own way. He proposed that a noble virtuous person (of the previous Kalpa) whose effects of past deeds fructified would get the body of *Chaturmukha Brahma* in the present Kalpa and with the force of his intention, this entire world would come into existence.

Then a question arose with regard to the details of the way the body would build up. In answer, Vasishta described the body as "Eight-part-town (*Puryaśtaka*)" – a composite of eight parts. The commentator described as:

> **"कर्म ज्ञानेएउद्रियगणौ भूतप्राण मनोओ गणाः अविद्या**
> **काम कर्माणि लिउगैः पुर्यxटकौ विदुः"**
>
> *karma jñāneeudriyagaṇau bhūtaprāṇa manoo gaṇāḥ avidyā*
> *kāma karmāṇi liugaiḥ puryaxṭakau viduḥ"*
>
> (Commentary to the Sloka 24)

"The Eight-part-town is composed of :

1. The Action Organs;
2. The Sense Organs;
3. The Subtle Five Great Elements;
4. The Five Airs;
5. The *Manas* (thoughts and counter thoughts), *Buddhi* (decisions), *citta* (recapitulations), *ahankāra* (I-consciousness);
6. Ignorance;
7. Desire; and
8. Action."

With the above eight parts coming together, the subtle body (*sukshma śarira* or *linga śarira*) forms. From this concept, it is easy to show that the physical body forms from the technique of "*Panchikaranm*" (combination of five elements in certain proportions) and consolidation. Thus it also makes it easy to say that the physical body which forms from the subtle five elements through *panchikarana* is an illusion. Vasishta explained this in the 45th Sarga.

From this it easily follows that this phenomenal world is an illusion like that of seeing a snake in a rope, and *jīvan muktās* (persons liberated right in this birth) who understand the truth of this could transcend the sorrows like old age, birth and death. Sage Vasishta gave a captivating description of the qualities of a *jīvan muktā* in the 46th Sarga in 32 slokas.

Sri Rama was not swept away by that poetic description. He asked Vasishta to spell out the details of the way the world was created from the intention of Hiranyagarbha as Vasishta referred to Hiranyagarbha earlier while discussing Hiranyagarbha's origin.

35. MYRIADS OF HIRANYAGARBHAS

Rama's question suited Vasishta's plan of teaching. In 90 slokas in the 47th Sarga, Vasishta talked of the process of creation and how creation would change in different Kalpa periods. Thus, he demonstrated once again that the whole world was an illusion.

We shall now look into this in some detail.

Vasishta: "Rama, you mention Hiranyagarbha. Which Hiranyagarbha and which of his intentions should I speak about? By now several thousands of Brahmas have gone. Hundreds of Vishnus and Shivas are gone. Millions of Indras are gone. Billions of universes related to them are also past now. Trillions of *jīvas* (individuals) and zillions of their generations exited! All these were like things born of magic! Can there be an order for creation or sustenance of things in a magic?

"The intentions and creations of Hiranyagarbha also go in a similar way. Some of these creations were of Brahma. Some are of Vishnu. Some are of Shiva. Some could even be those of Sages!! There are very many such creations.

यथा तरङ्गा जलधौ मृगतृष्णा मरौ यथा ।
कुसुमानि यथा चूते तथा विश्वश्रियः परे ।।

yathā taraṅgā jaladhau mṛgatṛṣṇā marau yathā |
kusumāni yathā cūte tathā viśvaśriyaḥ pare ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 47, Sloka 15

"Like the number of waves in an ocean, like the number of mirages in a desert or the number of flowers on a fully blossomed mango tree, there are infinite universes in the Supreme Consciousness.

"There is no rule that the creations, though of Brahma, will be all alike. Brahma was born from a lotus once. Another time from water. Still another time from an egg. Yet another time from just space. In one universe, Shiva is supreme. In another universe, Vishnu is supreme. In yet another, Indra is above these two. "In one creation, there were trees to start with on the earth. Another creation took off with mountains, slowly giving rise to life. It is impossible to narrate all the varieties. Whatever may be the number of creations, no one can stay forever.

यथा मशकजालानि वर्षादिष्वाकुलानि तु ।
उत्पत्त्योत्पत्त्य नश्यन्ति तथेमा लोकसृष्टयः ।।

yathā maśakajālāni varṣādiṣvākulāni tu |
utpattyotpattya naśyanti tathemā lokasṛṣṭayaḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 47, Sloka 17

"Similar to mosquitoes in the rainy season born and dead everyday, the creations come and go. In one Kalpa space may come out first. From space other things take shape.

In another Kalpa wind may come up first and from that other elements are generated. The generation of beings is also quite variable in that way.

"Sometimes a sound may come from the mouth of Prajapati (Lord of the people - creator) and the rest of creation has its origin in that sound. The creation may take place from his leg or eye! "The differences in creation come up because of the differences in the cogitations and contemplations that took place in the mind of a given Brahma during his preceding Kalpas when he had been a virtuous aspirant."

Rama: "Teacher! It is often said that Brahma was born from the lotus of the navel of Narayana. You also indicated that it was possible. Narayana signifies Ultra Pure Existence Consciousness. How could there be a navel for Consciousness? And a lotus in it? On the top of it, Brahma being born out of it ? Does it not all sound incongruous ?"

Vasishta: "How can there be rules for a dream? The whole creation is a dream! Each Night dreams are different. Therefore, the Puranas portrayed the emergence of the universes in a number of ways. At one place, it is said that with the power of the intention of Vishnu, a golden egg came into existence and Hiranyagarbha was born out of it. In another place it is said that the Supreme being seeded the waters that were spread all around and the universe sprouted out of it. One Purana says that the Sun of an earlier Kalpa is the Brahma of this Kalpa and another Purana says that the earlier Varuna is the present Brahma.

"We may deduce from putting together all these words that the world is no more than a projection of mind and nothing else ! Only to substantiate this that I have been recounting the sequences of creations.

"Rama, in every Kalpa Creation and Dissolution at its end and Creation again – the wheel of magic has been going on eternally. It is a great mysterious cycle."

किमेतस्मिन्महामायाडम्बरे दीर्घशम्बरे ।
राम सत्यमसत्यं वा निर्णेयं यदिहोच्यते ।।

kimetasminmahāmāyāḍambare dīrghaśambare |
rāma satyamasatyaṃ vā nirṇeyaṃ yadihocyate ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 47, Sloka 88

"In this great cycle of magic, in this unending delusion, what is there to determine truth or untruth? Nothing! In order to make things more clear, I shall narrate the story called "Daasura Upakhyana."

36. Dāsūra UPAKHYANA

Vasishta: "Rama, once upon a time there was the kingdom of Magadha where there used to be many Anthocephelus (kadamba - Latin name: Adina cordifolia) trees. Sage "Saraloma" used to meditate below one of these trees on a hill. His only son was Dāsūra. Dāsūra too used to meditate below another tree. Eventually, Saraloma passed away. His wife followed him into the funeral pyre. Dāsūra was left alone in that huge forest. He couldn't bear the loss of his parents and wept loudly. He wept for a long time.

"One day a goddess traveling by sky heard him crying and pitied him. She approached him in an invisible shape and consoled him with these words: "Son of a Great Sage ! Why do you cry? Even Brahma cannot escape his end. How can your father escape? Don't you realize that this world is impermanent? Please understand this and stop crying."

"Consoled and cajoled at these words, he felt relieved. He could remember the scriptures that he read. He could overcome his sorrow and performed the funeral rites for his parents. Then he went back to his meditation.

"Without the guidance and advice of his father, his meditation was not going well. Still, determinedly he pursued reciting Vedas and musing about their meaning. He developed concentration well. But the Truth about Self contained in the last parts of the Vedas eluded him. As a result, his mind did not attain serenity. He felt that the reason for his restless mind and his inability to be united with the Supreme could be the unholiness of the place. He went around the earth looking for an alternate place. He couldn't find any. He returned to his old Kadamba tree.

"He thought it over seriously. He resolved that the earth itself was not sanctified; that it was impious; and that living on it was not sacred. Hence he decided to live on the top of the tree like a bird in the sky, and continue his meditation there.

"A man can have sustenance on the earth but not on the tip of a tree. This *jivi* is wishing for sustenance at a place where sustenance is not possible for him. Therefore, he thought rigorously over this and embarked on severe practices. He lit a fire on the ground and made an offering of his own flesh into the fire. A man exists if there is flesh and muscle. If man exists he can eke out sustenance somewhere or other. This person wishing for sustenance at the tip of the tree was burning away his flesh and muscle!

"Even the Fire God was agitated at his practice. He was apprehensive that the gods might get burnt if he carried and gave the meat of that noble Brahmin to them. So he appeared before Daasura and appealed to him in these words

Fire God: "Please ask for whatever you want. Take a boon from me as if you are taking your own gem from a box –

कोशाकाशान्मणिं यथा

kośākāśānmaṇiṃ yathā

[The poet used a beautiful expression here. He did not just say, "take a gem from the box." He said, "Take a gem from the space in the box." Can there be sustenance for a gem in space whether the space is within a box or outside? The poet with this metaphor is hinting at the sustenance of a thing where its sustenance is not possible. This is the key issue that repeatedly comes up in the story of Dāsūra]

"Dāsūra was quite happy. He requested Fire God,

Dāsūra: "Oh, God of Fire! I do not see a sacred place on the earth. '**वृक्षाणामुपरि स्थितिरस्तु मे**' '*vṛkṣāṇāmupari sthitirastu me*', let me have sustenance on the top of the trees."

The Fire God blessed, "May it be so!" and disappeared. Soon Dāsūra reached the tip of the tree. The condition of Dāsūra there resembled Dissolution time when the whole creation was flooded with water and Child Krishna reached the top of a banyan tree. Dāsūra sat in lotus pose on a tender leaf on the last branch. As he was seated on an Anthocephelus Kadamba tree, he came to be known as "Kadamba Daasura."

"Dāsūra was not able to focus his mind on the truth of Self. His mind was inclined to perform rituals. But he was not on the ground to be able to perform rituals. Therefore, he started sacrificial rituals mentally. He worshipped gods mentally. This is a very powerful path for seekers. In course of time, because of his sincere practices, his mind was purified, he could recollect the teachings from his past lives and achieved self-realization.

"One day, when he was in that state, a goddess of the forest approached him and stood in a pathetic condition taking support of a creeper on the Anthocephelus tree. Dāsūra looked at her and asked her who she was and the reason for her sadness.

Forest goddess : "Oh, Great Muni! Elders say that a visit to pious persons fulfills even impossible desires. I have not come here recently. You have been staying at the end of the tree. I have been living on this creeper for a long time.

"The other day, on the 13th day of the Full moon half of the first month of the year (*caitra*), garden festivities were celebrated in the world of gods (*deva loka*). I went there too. My female friends were all there. I was the only woman without a son. I am childless. I felt very sad when I realized this. When you, a boon fulfilling well, are there near me on the top of this Anthocephelus tree, how can I be orphaned ? How can I be without a son ? I came with this hope. Therefore, Beloved, please bless me with a son. If you don't, not pieces of flesh like you did, but I will offer my entire body to the fire as a sacrifice."

"Kadamba Dāsūra was not moved by her words. Nor did he express anger. He smiled at her and tossed a flower gently into her hands. He told her,

Dāsūra: "Hey, Beauty! Don't be sad. Wear this flower in your hair. Within a month, you will have a son. But because you came to me with an emotion to end yourself, your son will be a Knower of Truth."

Though the Forest Goddess offered to stay with Daasura, he did not accept her offer and sent her away.

Twelve years passed by. Dāsūra never even thought of the goddess in the meantime. One day she came along with a 12 year old boy and bowed to Dāsūra respectfully.

She addressed him, "Bhagavan, this boy is our son. He is schooled in all the Vedas and scriptures. He has not yet learnt the Brahma Vidya (Knowledge of the Supreme Self) that can remove the worldly sorrows. Please teach him that.

को हि नाम कुले जातं पुत्रं मौर्ख्येण योजयेत् ।।

ko hi nāma kule jātaṃ putraṃ maurkhyeṇa yojayet ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 51, Sloka 28

"Will any father leave his own son as a fool?"

"Dāsūra gazed sternly for some time and said, "Leave the disciple here and you go."

"Dāsūra treated the boy as a disciple and not as his son. The boy reciprocated as a student towards his teacher. The boy served his teacher well with tolerance and forbearance. After a considerable period, the father began his instructions. As a result, the boy could gain only theoretical knowledge of truth as described in scriptures.

"Dāsūra, though had been living alone so far, used to contemplate deeply on the meaning of Vedas. Hence, he could teach the knowledge of the truth of Self (*ātma tatva jnāna*) as short stories. Under the influence of such stories, the boy could establish himself firmly in the direct (not indirect – aparokśa) experience of the truth of Self.

Vasishta: "Rama, please do not feel that I am telling you some fictitious story. I am telling you something I had seen with my own eyes.

"I was once proceeding to have a holy dip in the Gangotri (source of the River Ganges) in the Himalayas. I stopped for the night beneath an Anthocephelus kadamba tree. I heard after some time a sweet voice like the drone of a dragon fly. The sound was so fascinating that I listened to it with curiosity. One person was telling a story to another on that tree.

37. A STORY IN A STORY

The story went as follows:

Once upon a time there was a rich king. His name was "Swottha." Swottha means one who is born of himself. He was so dauntless that his orders were obeyed not merely by men but even the gods including Brahma and others. The gods of Eight Directions too could not oppose him. It was so because he had not one but three bodies. He could occupy the three worlds with these bodies. He roamed all the time in space (the sky) with his three bodies. In fact he was born there. He built a big town in space. He created in that town a few worldly creatures who were totally lost in the desires of various objects. He gave long life to some of them and a short span for others. He kept them separately. He called those with a short life as "Apavarakas" and in order to protect them, he arranged guards. He established business and commercial relations within the two groups.

"Whatever may be his arrangements, the king never allowed anything to stay permanently. He himself was indecisive and wavering by temperament. Nobody could predict his thoughts.

He used to intend all of a sudden to build new towns, instantly enter the yet-to-be-built towns, live in them for some time and destroy them by himself. He was a Royal Highness in one town and a beggar in another. He was a healthy happy go lucky guy in one place and a diseased person in another. Finally one day he completely ceased to be and disappeared.

"An elderly voice was relating the story. A young voice interrupted and asked a question as follows: "Father, it looks that there is an inner meaning to what you are saying. You seem to believe more in the inner meaning. You said that the king used to enter the to-be- built towns. 'To enter' indicates present tense. 'To-be-built', indicates future tense. What is the inner meaning ? Please bring forth the implication of all this.

"The father was pleased with the question.

"He replied, "Son, I told you that the name of the king was Swottha. **'स्वतः उत्थः इति स्वोत्थः'** *'svataḥ utthaḥ iti svotthaḥ'*. It means one who is born of himself. What can be born of itself in the creation ? Only the mind ! It is born of the un-manifested (avyakrita) space and ends there. I called the mind "king." The entire world is mind. If an intention is there, there is a world. There is no world in the absence of intention. Right from Brahma, Vishnu etc. all the creatures are hanging on to the branches of the mighty tree of intention!"

"What is the substance on which the mind could base itself to build the world ? It is the Ultra Pure Supreme Brahman Consciousness. Another name for that substratum is "Vacuum Space (*sūnyākaśa*)." So I said that the king constructed the town in space. The town I described represents the entire world.

"Men are the short-term creatures. Gods are with long lives. I named men as "Apavarakas." Apavaraka means a room. A room bounds (shields) the space. Man lives in the Supreme Consciousness. But he cannot see Him because he puts a veil on himself. So I compared a man to a room.

"Men worship gods with a desire to get benefits. Gods try to receive offerings from men through the sacrificial rites. So I compared the relation to that of a business between these two.

"Son! Every living individual has an I-consciousness or I-ness. But the I-ness does not stay the same all the time.

यथा कुसूले मार्जारो भस्त्रायां भुजगो यथा ।
मुक्ताफलं यथा वेणावहङ्कारस्तथा तनौ ।।

yathā kusūle mārjāro bhastrāyāṃ bhujago yathā |
muktāphalaṃ yathā veṇāvahaṅkārastathā tanau ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 53, Sloka 23

"Sometimes the I-ness lies around like the cat in a silo. The cat thinks, without any effect. It is called "Inert I-ness" – *tāmasa ahamkāra*. That is the I-ness in suśupti. I-ness in this sense is not arrogance. It is simply a consciousness of 'me.' "Sometimes the I-ness may strike like a "snake in bellows" when the bellows are pressed by hand.

["Snake in Bellows" is a saying which may not be familiar to the present day readers. It alludes to the olden times when ironsmiths operated bellows to blow air into the furnace which is used for heating iron. A leather bag is connected to the furnace by a tube. When the bag is pressed, air will go to the fire in the furnace. During nights when the bellows were not operated, there is scope for snakes to take shelter inside them. If the workers operate the bellows next morning without checking, the snakes in it may hiss at the workers and bite them.]

"I-ness of this type is referred to as 'Active I-ness' – rājasa ahamkāra. The cause of happiness and sorrow in the dream world is *rājasa ahamkāra*. "I-ness comes in a third form too. It is like the pearl in a bamboo! A bamboo refers to a worthless thing. But sometimes pearls grow on its nodes. They have great value. Similarly, valuable "Illuminating I-ness" – sattvik ahamkara may generate from the unworthy body. Usually an ability to bestow discretion vests with the I-ness in wakeful state. So it is called Illuminating I-ness or sattvik ahamkara. In order to indicate the changeable nature of I-ness, I described the king as wavering.

`"Every creature sees the world. It looks as though every one is looking at the same world. But each person is looking at what he himself conjures up as per his intentions. He sees as and when he conjures. I described this by saying that the king enters the future-town instantaneously.

भविष्यन्नवनिर्माणं स व्याप्नोति तदा पुरम् । यदा संकल्पितं वस्तु क्षणादेव प्रपश्यति ।।

bhaviṣyannavanirmāṇaṃ sa vyāpnoti tadā puram |
yadā saṃkalpitaṃ vastu kṣaṇādeva prapaśyati ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 53, Sloka 25

"Supposing your dream is your future world, aren't you entering into it ? If you take this world as a dream, entering this world is akin to going into a future-world ! The present and future tense is contradictory here. Still the entry is going on. People accept the time contradiction because conceptualization, construction and entering all take place at once. I compared this to the entry of the king into a future-town.

"An individual (*jīva*) runs in circles with the three types of I-ness, he assumes the births of a king, a beggar, a common man and so on. I described this as the king living in different towns in different styles. As the wheel rotates thus, somewhere along, he catches by good fortune, detachment (*vairāgya*). As he gets absorbed in Self and gains knowledge of Truth about Self, the individual is liberated. The king in my story "ceased and disappeared" implies the same. The individual who reached salvation merges in the Supreme Consciousness. Hence he does not have a distinct appearance any more. "*Nasam*" is used in Sanskrit to describe disappearance. '**नास अदर्शने**' "*nāsa adarsane*" is the root meaning; it does not connote death.

38. EMPTY THE MIND

Vasishta: "In essence, your mind is the king and I depicted the wanderings of the mind in my story. When there is a thought, the world (*samsāra*) arises. Whether it is the world in a wakeful state or dream state, it is a world! If the thoughts are extinguished temporarily, it is a suśupti (deep sleep) state. Though it does not appear like a world (*samsāra*), the deep sleep state is also *samsāra*. If you terminate the thoughts in your mind completely then you will obtain permanent liberation. Make an effort for that!

"You may feel that eradicating thought is very difficult and want to have a shortcut technique. The trinity of Gods cannot also suggest an alternate approach. Even if you burn yourself in fire, you will not find a second method. So stop thinking astray and work on ending thought."

"Rama! After this exposition, the son thought over it for a long time and asked his father, "What is thought? How does it originate? How does it grow? How does it end?"

"It's a truly thought-provoking question and his father gave an equally profound answer.

Dāsūra (The Father):

अनन्तस्यात्मतत्त्वस्य सत्तासामान्यरूपिणः ।
चितश्चेत्योन्मुखत्वं यत्तत्संकल्पाङ्कुरं विदुः ।।

anantasyātmatattvasya sattāsāmānyarūpiṇaḥ |
citaścetyonmukhatvaṃ yattatsaṃkalpāṅkuraṃ viduḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 54, Sloka 2

"There is the Supreme Self. It is infinite. The 'existence' principle – the beingness in everything in this world - is Its real form. Such 'existence' is called "common beingness (*sattā sāmanyam*)." Its true essential nature is consciousness. Another name for this is **चित्** *cit* (Pure Knowledge). Still another name is **दृक्** *dṛk* (A seer without any object to be seen).

"If we refer to Consciousness as the Seer, the world is the 'seen' (**दृश्य** *dṛśya*. If we call Consciousness as Pure Knowledge (**चित्** *cit*), the world is what is known (**चेत्य** *cetya*). **दृक्** *dṛk*– **दृश्य** *dṛśya and* **चित्** *cit* – **चेत्य** *cetya* are word pairs. **दृक्** *dṛk* is not truly related to **दृश्य** *dṛśya*. In the same way, we may say that **चित्** *cit* is not related to **चेत्य** *cetya*. Though unrelated, if **चित्** *cit* tends towards **चेत्य** *cetya*, that tendency is "thought – *sankalpa*." This is the seedling stage for the thought process. That is the way thought originates.

"Pure knowledge is real. **चेत्य** *cetya* is different from that. So it is unreal. If knowledge is tending towards **चेत्य** *cetya*, it means reality is tending towards unreality. So what comes out will be unreal, but not real. So thought can be unreal only and never real. The seedling of thought when it grows and swells brings out the "you-me", "we-they", "this-that" differences and manifests the whole world. Hence, the entire world is unreal!

"I have told you how thought originates and also how it expands. I have to tell you now the ways and means of annihilating it.

संकल्पेनैव संकल्पं मनसा स्वमनो मुने ।
छित्त्वा स्वात्मनि तिष्ठ त्वं किमेतावति दुष्करम्।।

saṃkalpenaiva saṃkalpaṃ manasā svamano mune |
chittvā svātmani tiṣṭha tvaṃ kimetāvati duṣkaram||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 54, Sloka 18

"Please be aware: any thought is untrue. Do not think of anything hereafter. Do not ruminate on the past comforts and sorrows. This is the best course for eradicating thought.

"To say, 'I will not think any more' is also a thought. This is referred to as "nullifying thought (*asankalpana sankalpa*)." This can wipe out all other thoughts and also obliterate itself.

"With a slight difference, there is another method. You have a mind. That which thinks is mind. Think without a break on the truth of self in your mind. This can also eliminate the mind. Is there any difficulty to do this?

"There is yet another method to stop thoughts. Think of the world as an illusion. Earlier you thought of the world as real. You thought the world existed. Hence it settled down as solid real. It is creating all sorts of problems for you. Now start thinking strongly that it is all unreal. That's all; it will be unreal !!

"Why go that far! Start assuming that the world is unreal through scriptural words, logic and experience. That's enough! Attachments and hatred will reduce in you. The intensity of happiness and sorrow will go down. The world becomes totally unreal!"

Son of Dāsūra: "Master! If the mind is the one creating and wiping out the whole world, why does the mind not carve out the world in a manner convenient to it ? Does anyone think of a fantasy that hurts oneself?"

Dāsūra: "Why not? People with a fickle mind do that ! Does not a monkey in the forest stick its leg into a clutter of branches and become crippled ? Your mind is covered with the impressions of past lives. It is like a fuzzy mirror. By its own nature, it has a connection to the substratum Consciousness **अधिष्ठान चैतन्य** (*adhiṣṭhāna caitanya*). But what's the use? Under the influence of the stain, the connection to the Consciousness modifies into vibration which appears as visible objects, and infects the mind with a new taint of capriciousness. That's why your mind behaves like the proverbial monkey in the jungle and hurts itself.

"The plaque on a copper pot will go away by polishing. The plaque on the mind will go away by the exercise of purging thoughts. Son! This is not all that difficult a job ! After all, you are not trying to get rid of something that is there. What you are doing is to get rid of something that is not really there, but appears to be there!

क्वासद्वस्तु चिरं स्थितम् *kvāsadvastu ciraṃ sthitam*

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 54, Sloka 39

"Can a non-existing thing stick for long? Hence, strive hard for the annihilation of thought."

Vasishta: "Rama, I felt very happy when I listened to the conversation of the father and son who were sitting on the last branches of the tree. I went and stood in front of Dāsūra. Dāsūra welcomed me respectfully. I joined the duo and narrated some strange stories of truth. We spent the night in pious discussions. I left at dawn back on my way.

"Rama, I told you the story that Dāsūra told his son. No father will tell a lie to his son. He narrated his own experience. That is a fact.

तस्माद्विकल्पं मलमात्मनस्त्वं निर्धूय पश्यामलमात्मतत्त्वम् ।
आसादयिष्यस्यचिरात्पदं तद्भविष्यसीज्यो भुवनेषु येन ।।

tasmādvikalpaṃ malamātmanastvaṃ nirdhūya paśyāmalamātmatattvam
āsādayiṣyasyacirātpadaṃ tadbhaviṣyasījyo bhuvaneṣu yena ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 55, Sloka 40

"Therefore, Rama, recognize that the dirt on your mind is thought. Remove it and see the stainless knowledge of Self. Just have a look and you become that ! You will be worshipped by the whole world if you get to that stage."

[With this Sage Vasishta completed what he wanted to teach about sustenance of the world. He was yet to teach about the Dissolution of the world. His teaching had to combine dissolution of the mind along with the dissolution of the world in the next chapter as he proceeds to talk about the methods of obtaining a thoughtless state. Sage Vasishta allotted seven Sargas for this topic. The discussion went on from the 56th to 62nd Sarga. He presented what had already been talked about using technical and scriptural jargon. We shall cover them as briefly as possible. The 56th Sarga opens with a question raised by Vasishta himself.]

39. SCRIPTURAL DISCUSSION

Vasishta: "Rama! You have affection for this world. Do you love it because it is true or untrue? Or both true and untrue? What happens under each assumption? Let us see!

"Let the world be true. That is to say it is real. You are also real. You are the seer (subject). The world is the view (object). If these two are real, is the objective world dependent on you? Or is it independent? We cannot call it independent and real substance, if it is dependent on you. A reality that does not have independence is not reality at all! Then why have affection for something that is not real ? Why attachment? Leave all that!

"Okay, let us grant for the moment that the visible objective world is real, independent and different from you. If that is true, there is no relation subsisting between you both. Why should you have affection for something you are not related to? Why should you have an attachment on some part of it as "me" and some part of it as "mine?" So even from this angle, you should leave all that!

"If you accept that the world is unreal, any attachment to it is futile. So leave it!

"Do you like to say that the world is a combination of real and unreal? When its quality is undecided, why love it ? Even in this case, attachment to the world is unworthy!

"Lastly, is there a creator (author) for this world? Or there is none? In other words, is it authored or unauthored? Or a combination of authored and unauthored? Just as we have concluded in all the above cases, even here, it is not befitting to have love for the world!"

Rama: "Teacher! The matter is not so crystal clear. The scriptures say,

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante* |

ṭaitariyopaniośad 1-3-1

विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता । *viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā* |

mundakopaniśad 1-1-1

meaning thereby that the Supreme Lord is the author of the universe, can we call this world authorless?"

Vasishta: "The Vedas did not just stop with those two sentences.

यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्ण मचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।
नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तदव्ययं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः

yattadadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇa macakṣuḥśrotraṃ tadapāṇipādam |
nityaṃ vibhuṃ sarvagataṃ susūkṣmaṃ tadavyayaṃ yadbhūtayoniṃ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ

mundakopaniśad 1-1-6

"There are hundreds of sentences like the above. The Supreme Lord is described here as unattached, actionless etc."

Rama: "Which sentences are important? Which sentences are secondary?"

Vasishta: "One has to see which sentence appears in what context. If you examine it that way, it will be clear that all such sentences as "*viśvasya karta*" were figuratively propounded to prove indirectly that the world is untrue! Hence, it is proper to decide that the world is unauthored (uncreated). Where is the wisdom in developing attachment for such a world ?"

Rama: "You keep saying that the Supreme Self is luminescent. Just as the sun is the cause for the brilliance (visibility) of the objects, why can't the Supreme Self be the author of this creation?"

Vasishta: "People say that the sun shines. That means the sun is the author for the action of brilliance. Let us see how far this is true.

सर्वेच्छारहिते भानौ यथा व्योमनि तिष्ठति ।
जायते व्यवहारश्च सति देवे तथा क्रिया ।।

sarvecchārahite bhānau yathā vyomani tiṣṭhati |
jāyate vyavahāraśca sati deve tathā kriyā ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 29

"In making an object brilliant, is there an effort by the sun? Does he have a desire to make something brilliant? Does he have any ego that "I am the one making things brilliant"? An object is there. Is the sun possessive of it to make it brilliant ? He does not have any of these attributes. How can the sun who does not have ego, possessiveness, desire or effort be an author?

"The sun is there by himself unconcerned. Objects gathered beside him. Soon the ignorant declare that the sun is the author of brilliance. It means that they are attributing the action of illumination to the sun basing their observation of the object beside him !

"It's happening in the same way in the case of Self too. The Supreme Self is self-luminescent. Knowledge is its essential nature. (It is also called *drigrūpa*). There are no modifications for that. It stays as a witness to all minds. In spite of that, when an object (**दृश्य** *dṛśya*) like the mind comes beside it, the ignorant people declare "The Supreme Self is the author of mind." This is happening due to the superimposition of the three *gunās*. All this means that the Supreme Self by his very nature does not have any authorship!

"If you think intelligently like that, there is no reason to have any love for the world. "Therefore, Rama, you can contemplate and meditate in three ways.

कर्ता नास्मि न चाहमस्मि स इति ज्ञात्वैवमन्तः स्फुटं ।
कर्ता चास्मि समग्रमस्मि तदिति ज्ञात्वाथवा निश्चयं।।
कोप्येवास्मि नकिंचिदेवमिति वा निर्णीय सर्वोत्तमे ।
तिष्ठ त्वं स्वपदे स्थिताःपदविदो यत्रोत्तमाः साधवः ।।

kartā nāsmi na cāhamasmi sa iti jñātvaivamantaḥ sphuṭaṃ |
kartā cāsmi samagramasmi taditi jñātvāthavā niścayaṃ||
kopyevāsmi nakiṃcidevamiti vā nirṇīya sarvottame |
tiṣṭha tvaṃ svapade sthitāḥpadavido yatrottamāḥ sādhavaḥ ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 49

First method:

'कर्ता नास्मि न चाहमस्मि स इति ज्ञात्वैवमन्तः स्फुटं'

'kartā nāsmi na cāhamasmi sa iti jñātvaivamantaḥ sphuṭaṃ' |

"I am not the body etc. which attributes authorship to me. I am not any object in this world", thus can one contemplate. This is the first method

Second method:

'कर्ता चास्मि समग्रमस्मि तदिति ज्ञात्वाथवा निश्चयं'

'kartā cāsmi samagramasmi taditi jñātvāthavā niścayaṃ'

" There is a twist in this sentence. The word "*samagra*" can be applied in two ways. One application is **'समग्रं कर्ता च अस्मि'** '*samagraṃ kartā ca asmi*' . Here *samagra* is a singular number, an objective case. The other application is **'समग्रं तत् अस्मि'** '*samagraṃ tat asmi*'. Here the word "*samagra*" is a nominative case, singular number. Rama, the particular meaning coming out is: I am the author for the whole world; not just for part of it. Not only that – the entire Universe is completely me !

"Be in that resolve. This is the second method.

Third method

'कोप्येवास्मि नकिंचिदेवमिति वा निर्णीय सर्वोत्तमे'

' kopyevāsmi nakiṃcidevamiti vā nirṇīya sarvottame'

"Or, Think on the line that "I am neither that nor this. It is not possible to decide what I am." This is the third method.

"Rama, you may contemplate in any of the three methods, you will be in the form of Supreme, Perfect, Blissful Consciousness. Noble practitioners of times past who obtained knowledge of Brahman meditated like that. Please follow them.

Sage Vasishta completed the 56th Sarga on that note.

Sri Rama, partly immersed in contemplating the Truth of Self, had this question.

40. ANNIHILATION OF IMPRESSIONS

Rama: "Teacher! I understand now clearly. What you said is true. There is no reality at all in this world. But in the case of the everlasting, real Supreme Self, why did mutually contradicting ideas like unreal - real, author - not author, limited – infinite etc. originate? There cannot be snow in the sun ! Could differentiation be imagined in the Supreme ? I am not able to get rid of this doubt. Please answer me.

Vasishta: "Rama! I am happy. You could comprehend the subject well. But the impressions of past actions in you have not yet fully evaporated. That is the reason for your doubt. I shall give you a proper answer while teaching the final principles in the forthcoming chapter on Nirvana. For the present, I shall confer on how to annul impressions. Rama! Please know this:

बद्धो हि वासनाबद्धो मोक्षः स्याद्वासनाक्षयः । वासनास्त्वं परित्यज्य मोक्षार्थित्वमपि त्यज

baddho hi vāsanābaddho mokṣaḥ syādvāsanākṣayaḥ |
vāsanāstvaṃ parityajya mokṣārthitvamapi tyaja ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 57, Sloka 19

"Being tied down with impressions is bondage; eradication of impressions is liberation.

"Cultivate the four qualities that are talked about in standard Yoga Books. These four are "Friendliness, compassion, cheerfulness and indifference." Be friendly towards happy people; be compassionate to those who are in sorrow; be cheerful with meritorious people; and be indifferent towards sinners. Contemplating in this manner brings calmness to the mind. A calm mind facilitates abidance in deep meditation (*samādhi niśta*). When once established like that, leave even this contemplation and enter firmly into Supreme Consciousness through *asamprajnāta samādhi*. *Asamprajnāta samādhi* is the topmost of the variety of *samādhi*s (deep meditation) propounded in yoga books.

शेषे स्थिरसमाधानो येन त्यजसि तत्त्यज ।। *śeṣe sthirasamādhāno yena tyajasi tattyaja* ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 57, Sloka 22

"You will see for yourself your true nature as Supreme Consciousness.

"Rama, there is another method to achieve this. We should meditate on great persons who conquered their senses. There is another technique also. Whatever may be the number of universes, all of them are composed of the five elements. There is no sixth one. The five elements are modifications of the substratum (Brahman) only. If you deeply investigate this by analysis, you will lose all attraction for the comforts of the earth, heaven or nether worlds and that will lead to final liberation.

Sage Vasishta thus articulated in detail the path to be followed by Sri Rama and moved on to the 58th Sarga.

Vasishta: "Rama! You may wonder if a state that is totally free of bondage and filled with Supreme Consciousness is experienced at all by any !

"Long back Kacha, the son of Brihaspati had such an experience. Look at the songs he sang spontaneously in that state.

"Everybody keeps telling stories about many struggles that Kacha went through in acquiring the special "Sanjivini knowledge." Bringing back the dead to life is the specialized subject of Sanjivini knowledge. Nobody bothered what happened to him after that. That great individual left his teacher's place, stayed all alone in a forest and practiced rigorously seeking the knowledge of Brahman. In due course of time, he had that marvelous experience of Supreme Consciousness. With happiness at a crescendo, with rapturous ecstasy, he occasionally used to sing melodious tunes.

किं करोमि क्व गच्छामि किं गृह्णामि त्यजामि किम्।
आत्मना पूरितं विश्वं महाकल्पाम्बुना यथा ।। ५
दुःखमात्मा सुखं चैव खमाशासुमहत्तया ।
सर्वमात्ममयं ज्ञातं नष्टकष्टोऽहमात्मना ।। ६
सबाह्याभ्यन्तरे देहे अधश्चोर्ध्वं च दिक्षु च ।
इत आत्मा ततश्चात्मा नास्त्यनात्ममयं क्वचित् ।। ७
सर्वत्रैव स्थितो ह्यात्मा सर्वमात्ममयं स्थितम् ।
सर्वमेवेदमात्मैवमात्मन्येव भवाम्यहम् ।। ८
यन्नाम नाम तत्किंचित्सर्वमेवाहमान्तरः ।θ
आपूरितापारनभाः सर्वत्र सन्मयः स्थितः ।। ९
पूर्णस्तिष्ठामि मोदात्मा सुखमेकार्णवोपमः ।
इत्येवं भावयंस्तत्र कनकाचलकुञ्जके ।। १०
उच्चारयन्नोङ्कारं च घण्टास्वनमिव क्रमात् ।
ओंकारस्य कलामात्रं पाश्चात्यं वालकोमलम् ।
नान्तरस्थो न बाह्यस्थो भावयन्परमे हृदि ।। ११
व्यपगतकलनाकलङ्कशुद्धो
हृदयनिरन्तरलीनवातवृत्तिः ।
गतघनशरदाशयोपमानः स्थित इति राम कचः स गायमानः ।।१२

kiṃ karomi kva gacchāmi kiṃ gṛhṇāmi tyajāmi kim|
ātmanā pūritaṃ viśvaṃ mahākalpāmbunā yathā || 5
duḥkhamātmā sukhaṃ caiva khamāśāsumahattayā |
sarvamātmamayaṃ jñātaṃ naṣṭakaṣṭo'hamātmanā || 6
sabāhyābhyantare dehe adhaścordhvaṃ ca dikṣu ca |
ita ātmā tataścātmā nāstyanātmamayaṃ kvacit || 7
sarvatraiva sthito hyātmā sarvamātmamayaṃ sthitam |
sarvamevedamaatmaivamaatmanyeva bhavaamyaham || 8
yannaama naama tatkimchitsarvamevaahamaantarah |θ
aapuuritaapaaranabhaah sarvatra sanmayah sthitah || 9
puurnastishthaami modaatmaa sukhamekaarnavopamah |
ityevam bhaavayamstatra kanakaachalaku~njake || 10
uchchaarayanno~nkaaram cha ghantaasvanamiva kramaat |
omkaarasya kalaamaatram paashchaatyam vaalakomalam |
naantarastho na baahyastho bhaavayanparame hrridi || 11
vyapagatakalanaakala~nkashuddho

hrridayanirantaraliinavaatavrrittih |
gataghanasharadaashayopamaanah
sthita iti raama kachah sa gaayamaanah || 12

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 58, Sloka 5 to 12

"Ah! What's there to do? Go whereunto?
What to be rid of; or hang on to?
Whole universe is with me permeated
As floods of Dissolution all over spread.

Delight or distress, both I am.
The enjoying entity as well I am.
All paths to Truth are what I am
For surely in the Supreme Self I am.

Up above or down below,
Right in front or just behind,
Here or there, it's me anywhere.
No space where I don't grace.

Quarks or sparks in there I exist.
Whole worlds in me persist.
Like infinite waters oceanic,
Bliss I am, whole and idyllic.

"Rama! Kacha used to sing thus in rhapsodies about his ineffable experience. So you do not need to have a doubt about it. Hence with resolute intellect, leave out attraction for enjoyment and contemplate on the Universal Self."

Rama brooded on these words. When he asked a philosophical question regarding the Supreme Consciousness (Brahman), the teacher declared that he was not eligible for an answer as yet. So he wanted to gather more information about Brahma with attributes, the creator of the universe. With this in mind, he asked a question again.

41. FROM SUBTELITY TO GROSSNESS

Rama: "Master, Mind is a subtle substance. One particular mind of the erstwhile Kalpa attained the position (title) of Hiranyagarbha in this Kalpa and embarked on creation. How does the solid physical material evolve from the subtle mind substance? How is Hiranyagarbha bringing about this transformation from subtlety to grossness? Will you please tell me in detail ?

Vasishta: “That is the power of intention !

संकल्पजालरूपस्य मनसा कल्पिताकृतेः ।
अकरोत्तस्य संकल्पलक्ष्मीः पदमथोत्तरे ।।

saṃkalpajālarūpasya manasā kalpitākṛteḥ |
akarottasya saṃkalpalakṣmīḥ padamathottare ||

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 59, Sloka 15

“Rama! The thoughts of his past Kalpa make up his present form. That means his present form takes shape based on his past thoughts. His wealth is the wealth of thoughts (and intentions) only. It is these thoughts that continue the creation. To give an example, he thought about Fire. He entered into that thought. The thought took a gross form. That has become the Sun. We see that sun everyday even now. This is the process by which grossness comes into being from subtlety in all substances.”

Once again Sage Vasishta described the sequence of creation. In order to explain in terms of the three *gunās,* he extended the narration to over two and half Sargas. He added contextual methods of spiritual practice at some places. We shall not go into them now as these were all discussed earlier.

Sage Vasishta closed the Chapter on Sustenance with the 62nd Sarga where he brought out a convergence in his depiction of creation in terms of three *gunās,* and the description of the path for liberation.

हितं महासत्त्वतयात्मतत्त्वंविधाय बुद्ध्या भव वीतशोकः ।
तव क्रमेणैव ततो जनोऽयंमुक्तो भविष्यत्यथ वीतशोकः ।।

hitaṃ mahāsattvatayātmatattvaṃ vidhāya buddhyā bhava vītaśokaḥ |
tava krameṇaiva tato jano'yaṃ mukto bhaviṣyatyatha vītaśokaḥ ||

Sthitri Prakarana, Sarga 62, Sloka 20

“Rama, develop *sattva* quality in yourself. When the mind becomes pure, knowledge of truth will be dear and close to you. You will experience it. Unhappiness will disappear. If you do like that, others will follow you and attain the state of liberty which is devoid of Unhappiness.”

Thus Sage Vasishta ends the Chapter on Sustenance and about to enter into the Chapter on Dissolution. Before we follow him into the next chapter, let us review the progressive steps in his teaching in the Chapter on Sustenance!

42. SUMMARY OF BOOK 4 – STHITI PRAKARANA - SUSTENANCE

It is generally accepted that there are six types of changes, labeled "Six fold change", for any substance in the world. The six changes are:

1.	Birth	–	जायते	*jāyate*
2.	Existence	–	अस्ति	*asti.*
3.	Development	–	वर्धते	*vardhate.*
4.	Modification	–	विपरिणमते	*vipariṇamate*
5.	Decline	–	अपक्षीयते	*apakśiyate.*
6.	Death	–	विनश्यति	*vinaśyati*

The inevitability of the six types of changes can be grasped well with the following example.

Let us say there is a flower on a plant in farmland. The next day, it dried up and there was a small bulge at the stalk. The farmer who observes it would gleefully express, "Fruit is being born." This is जायते *jāyate*.

After a few days, the raw fruit would appear. The farmer will say, "Tender fruit is there." This is अस्ति *asti*.

As the farmer keeps observing it, the fruit grows to full size. This is वर्धते *vardhate*.

The growth stops after some days and it slowly matures and ripens. Its phase changes. This is विपरिणमते *vipariṇamate*.

After a few more days, it dries up and shrinks. This is अपक्षीयते *apakśiyate*.

Finally one day, it drops down. That is विनश्यति *vinaśyati*.

Though not apparent as clearly as depicted in the above example, every substance in the world necessarily goes through the six changes. More commonly the states of birth (जायते j*ayate*) and death (विनश्यति *vinasyati*) are recognized. It is a general practice to club together the intermittent four stages and refer to them by one word – स्थिति *sthiti* or sustenance. Sage Vasishta also used the word स्थिति *sthiti* in this sense.

In this world, there cannot be sustenance for a substance unless it is born. When once it is dead or destroyed, there is no sustenance for it back again. Everyone believes this to be a fact. How far is this belief justified ? Sage Vasishta dealt with this topic in this Chapter.

In the last chapter (Yoga Vasishta - Book 2 - Utpatti Prakarana - Creation), Vasishta established that the world was not created at all. When something was not created, there cannot be sustenance (स्थिति *sthiti*) for it. When there is no sustenance, what is there to be discussed ? To answer this question, he opened the Chapter on Sustenance with "*Bhargava Upakhyana*."

In that story, Sukra was in a deep penance on a hill slope at some place on the earth. At that time, he experienced joys in heaven with a second body. When was the second body born? As a matter of fact, it was never born. **जायते** *jāyate* is not applicable to it. It started with existence (**अस्ति** *asti*). Sustenance continued from then on. Is this condition like a dream or magic? We cannot say so. The second body sustained several births and deaths. At the end, Sukra entered back into his old body with the help of the teachings of the God of Death and burnt the second body. That means, the second body started with **अस्ति** *asti*, crossed the phases of **वर्धते, विपरिणमते, अपक्षीयते** *vardhate*, *vipariṇamate*, *apakśiyate* and then ended (reached the final phase viz. **विनश्यति** *vinasyati*). However, in the meanwhile, his original body stayed at the **अस्ति** asti stage. This implies that Sukra got back into sustenance even after the sixth phase of death. How could this be possible? Intellectuals have to delve on this puzzle.

Vedantins (Philosophers) usually cite the experience of a dream, magic or fantasy to show that the world is unreal and illusory. Sometimes seeker disciples get tired of the very same examples quoted to illustrate the illusory nature. Sage Vasishta circumvented that ennui narrating to Sri Rama, as an example, an event that actually took place at the time of the beginning of the Kalpa. Vasishta said that at the start of the Kalpa, when it opened with Krita Yuga, a variety of very strange creatures were born. One of such strange living beings was Sukra. The example given by Vasishta was the life history of Sukra.

Through the story of Sukra, he focused the spotlight honing onto a strange situation and provided an enlarged view on sustenance (**स्थिति** *sthiti*) without birth. The sustenance continues even after **विनश्यति** *vinaśyati* – death. What shall we call sustenance when it lacks both the beginning and the end? It has to be an illusion. There is no other way. The essence of the entire Chapter on **स्थिति** *stithi* (Sustenance) is reflected in this story.

But the questions continue! How can such a condition exist? How does it occur?

In answer to these questions, Sage Vasishta narrated "*dāma vyāla kata upākhyana*." This story is an allegory and we discussed in detail the inner meaning in the text. The snake (*vyāla*) got sustenance on the rope. But the same threads woven together in another way gave sustenance to a mat (*kata*). This was illustrated in the "*dāma vyāla kata upākhyana.*" Vasishta did not cook up the story. It was a true event. Even here he described sustenance without birth. But it was a dependent sustenance. *dāma vyāla kata* 's sustenance was dependent on Sambara. Likewise the sustenance of *bhīma, bhāsa and dridha* too depended on Sambara.

But Sage Vasishta did not focus on the continuation of sustenance after death. How long can sustenance that was not preceded by birth continue? When does it annihilate? How does it annihilate? These were the questions he concentrated on. That is the reason that he told Sri Rama in the discourse after the presentation of the story:

कुतो जातेयमिति ते राम मास्तु विचारणा
इमां कथमहं हन्मीत्येषा तेऽस्तु विचारणा

kuto jāteyamiti te rāma māstu vicāraṇā ||
imāṃ kathamahaṃ hanmītyeṣā te'stu vicāraṇā |

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 31-32

"Rama! Don't worry yourself with questions like wherefrom did this illusion originate? Or Why did it originate? Or How? The only query should be 'How am I to get rid of it ?'."

As a clue, he said through Yamadharmaraja's words that Daama, Vyaala and Kata had to know their entire life history if they had to be free of their sorrows. By "To know their entire life history" it is meant that their sustenance was actually dependent on 'Sambara' (they did not have independent **स्थिति** *sthiti*) and because they forgot about that fact, they had to go through so many births and deaths !

Okay, *dāma vyāla kata* were dependent on Sambara for their sustenance. What about us, the ordinary folk? Our sustenance depends on the "Root Nescience" or in other words, ignorance. If we understand this much, it is enough, ignorance will be gone. We become free of the bondage of this world. That was the central point conveyed by Sage Vasishta in *dāma vyāla kata* story.

The Sage spent considerable time in the discourse that followed the story on the issue of calming down the mind. It amounts to the same thing whether we say the mind has calmed down or ignorance has disappeared. The route is Self-inquiry. To emphasize the point, Sage Vasishta portrayed "*kadamba dāsūra ūpākhyāna*."

kadamba dāsūra is a peculiar name! It is derived from Sanskrit: **कौ वयुं दमयतीति कादम्बः** "*kau vāyum - damayatīti kadambaḥ*" *Kadamba* means one which controls the group of diseases based on *vata* (*vata* can be approximately expressed as bodily imbalance of gases). It refers to the Anthocephelus Kadamba tree. That is the usual grammatical meaning. The sense it is used in this Chapter comes from another interpretation. *Vata* means the air we breathe. *Kadamba* means the one who controls the breath through *Pranayama*.

चलॆ वाते चलौ चित्तौ – निस्चाली निस्चलौ भवॆत् "*calee vātee calau cittau – niścalee niścalau bhaveet*" is a saying in the Yoga science. It means that if breath moves in a man, his mind moves too. If the breath stops, the mind becomes still !

Because *dāsūra* was a person who achieved an unperturbed state of the mind, he was *kadamba dāsūra*. In the story, he was seated on the top of the Kadamba tree, which is the cure for gas imbalance problems.

The word *dāsūra* also has a special meaning. The poet used it with a little bit of a twist. "*dasa dāne*" is the root word in Sanskrit. *dāsah* means to give alms (gifts). Based on this root word, Vishnu got the name as "dāsārha." In the thousand names used for the worship of Vishnu, one word is "*dāśārha sātvatāupatiḥ*" One who is adept at giving alms is *"dāsasura" or "dāsūra."*

What is meant by alms? To give away what one has amounts to giving alms. Another word for giving alms is sacrifice. Renunciation is yet another word. The hero of the story, *dāsūra* was also a great donor. He renounced anger too along with desire! He did not get angry when the forest damsel requested him to bestow children. Nor was he aroused sensually. *dāsūra* was a true renouncer, an adept donor !

Of all knowledge, knowledge of Brahman is the most supreme. Imparting knowledge too is giving alms ! *dāsūra* had become a great donor by teaching skillfully Self-knowledge through simple stories. The fact that Vasishta himself appreciated the way *dāsūra* gave away the knowledge was already mentioned in the text in the last part of the story.

Though Sage Vasishta presented that dāsūra sat at the tip of a tree where sustenance was not possible, he did not emphasize the point about sustenance as it was already mentioned twice. He focused, instead, on the illusory nature of the world and on the methods to be adopted by a seeker to get rid of ignorance and to obtain annihilation of mind.

In order to prove that such experience of being free from ignorance is truly possible for noble men, Vasishta talked about Kacha, son of Brihaspati. He then described the state of the world in terms of the three *guna*s. By inculcating the *Sattva guna*, into the mind, he advised to annihilate the mind and arrive at a state of sorrowlessness. With these words, he closed the Chapter. The next Chapter on Dissolution was then taken up.

We shall follow Sage Vasishta into the next Chapter on Dissolution after reviewing the events depicted in the stories and thinking over the points made out in this short summary.

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